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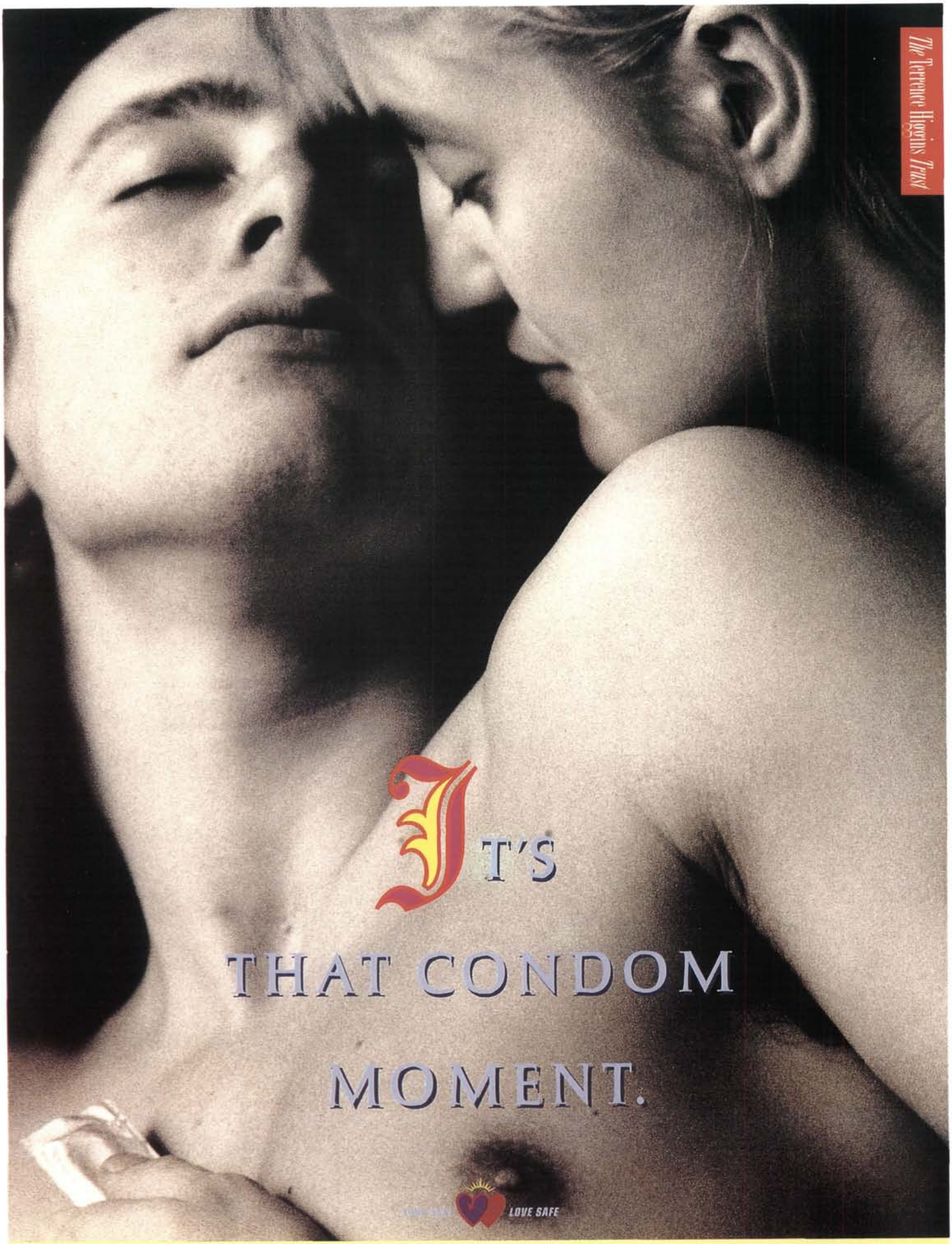

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The Raymond Williams Memorial Fund

'I've often defined my own social purpose as the creation of an educated and participating democracy. The WEA taught me much, in defining these terms.'

Raymond Williams was one of the most original and prolific socialist writers in English. Like Tawney and G. D. H. Cole, he was deeply involved in the adult education movement in the formative period of his working life: for fifteen years he worked full-time as an adult-education tutor teaching more than 1,000 WEA students in every kind of class from tutorials to summer and weekend schools.

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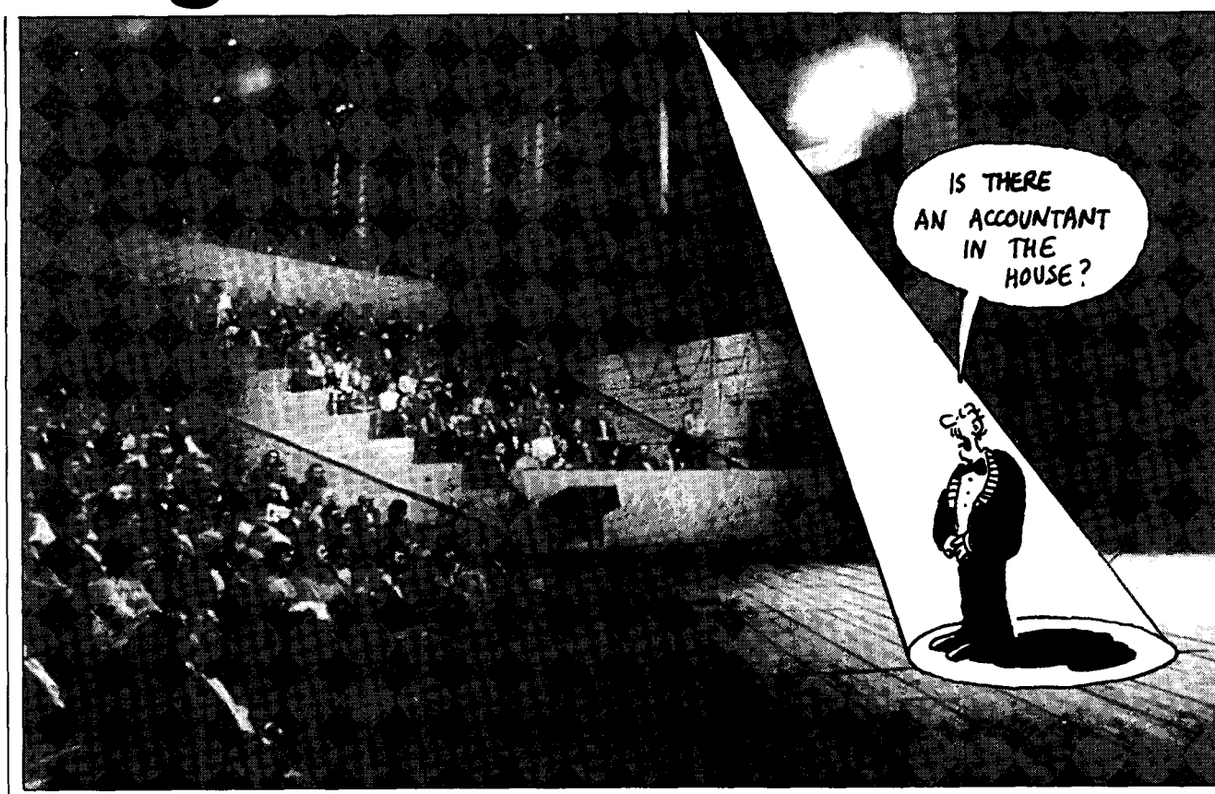
David Edgar on the state of the British theatre

Stage Left



Cartoon: Nick Newman

The surprising thing about the current crisis in the British theatre is not that it's happening but that it's taken so long. The arts in general – and the performing arts in particular – have proved remarkably resilient to the Great Bourgeois Cultural Revolution. As other institutions have bent and broken, the theatre has continued to operate on impeccably social-welfarist principals. Even now, optimists can observe small clumps of strolling players still limping bravely round a battlefield on which whole divisions –here the universities, there the broadcasters, there again the unions – lie mouldering in shallow graves.

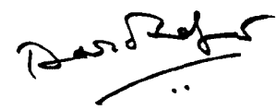
The case for the pessimists is however becoming more pressing. Almost every regiona! repertory company is running a deficit. The Royal Shakespeare Company has closed down its London operation for four months. Most importantly, the production of new plays – the lifeblood of the theatre – has haemorrhaged. From 1970 to 1985 about 12% of the subsidised theatre repertoire consisted of premieres. Since 1985, the proportion has fallen to 7%. Unlike (say) opera, the theatre appears to have lost confidence in itself. It is falling back on the popular classics (particularly Shakespeare) and stage adaptations of novels.

It has also begun to be infected by the spirit of the times. Up and down the land, theatres are preparing business plans, and opening corporate sponsorship suites. The recently renamed Royal National Theatre describes itself as 'a high performance investment', offering sponsoring firms 'increased corporate awareness'; the equally Royal Shakespeare Company assures businessmen that it 'can tailor a project to suit a company's individuality and offer a high return on sponsorship investment'.

Despite all of this, those who distrust the theatre as a last redoubt of cultural leftism are not silenced. The *Sunday Telegraph* frightens the children with the prospect of Harold Pinter or Peter Hall influencing public policy; when Bernard Levin is short of a topic for *The Times* (as he was on October 29 last), he excoriates contemporary playwrights for claiming that: 'Mrs Thatcher dines nightly on grilled working-class baby'. And the Adam Smith Institute argues that if the theatre didn't have subsidy it would be forced to be popular (even now, the Royal Shakespeare Company plays to over a million people a year).

So why all the bile? Why don't the critics leave the poor old thing to crumble into dust, victim of death by a thousand cuts? One answer is that the subsidised theatre is an example of the very best kind of socialist enterprise. In exchange for a modest (but necessarily permanent) public investment, people of talent pool their resources in pursuit of a common goal. They are rightly concerned about their level of remuneration, but nobody believes they are or ever would be in it just for the money. They pay attention to the wider social and political meaning of their work (the movement for racially integrated casting and the growth in numbers of successful women writers and directors in the 80s are examples). Very large numbers of them have been involved in the campaign to democratise working practices and widen the audience. In short, the theatre challenges the notion that peoples basic work motivation is material advantage, and gives some support to the idea that within the right environment people of individuality and talent can function collectively, collaboratively and efficiently.

Plus of course there is the nightly audience that comes together (on the basis of collectively agreed rules) in pursuit of an experience of mutual and communal enlightenment, and sometimes even gets it. No wonder the people who run this country at the moment dislike the theatre so much.●



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EYE TO EYE

Beatrix Campbell on the future for the Liberal Democrats

The New Citizen

Photography: Abel Lagos

Paddy Ashdown is Leader of the Liberal Democrats

What distinguishes the meanings that you attach to the notion of citizenship, from the Right, and from the Left?
It's very difficult for me to describe this other than in very specific terms, but I'll try. The Tories see citizenship as 'the good citizen', rather like the Good Samaritan. By definition they have to be rich, because it's all about contributing to charity. If you're poor, you can't be a 'good citizen'.

Indeed, from one of Thatcher's speeches it seemed to me that if you were female you couldn't be a 'good citizen' either, because she constantly used the word 'he', 'he', 'he'.

I don't think Labour understand citizenship at all because they are absolutely immured in the old mass movements. One of my fellow MPs said the other day, we are to the right of the Conservative Party on the free market and to the left of the Labour Party on welfare. I want to see an economy in which the levers of power lie with the individual. Consumer rights – I mean rights, not consumerism – are citizens' power in the economic context.

Until now we have seen citizenship as a collection of political rights. It extends well beyond that. If you take them in their economic context, then you're in favour of competition and anti-corporatism. This Government is just as corporatist as the Labour Government of the 1970s. That was trade-union corporatism, this is city boardroom corporatism. Our belief in competition, in providing opportunities for every citizen, for self employment, is because we believe in having the right to share in the profits you helped to make.

And there is a third aspect of citizenship – power in the social infrastructure. I have been trying to make the Party shift from saying that the citizen is served by the corporate institutions of the state, towards the citizen having a set of basic entitlements – where they come from is a matter of less importance to me – education entitlements, health entitlements, welfare entitlements. We have gone further in the welfare field than in any other. For the last ten years I have been arguing, with my Party, the case for a citizen's wage.

The basic income, irrespective of contribution. That's a very, very radical proposal.
It's extremely radical. That's where we are. Our position on formal policy is now a common benefit.

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There is a real unease in your position with the world of production, the workplace. You talk expansively about people owning their own businesses, people being self-determining in the economy. But you're not very comfortable with the organised world of waged work, which still is the economic context in which most people find themselves.

You're right, if you're talking about me personally. I wouldn't say it about the Party. The pattern of employment in the future is going to be much more flexible. If trade unions persist in running the case for the mass movement as the instrument of power – and I want to see a vibrant, strong trade union movement in Britain – then they are going to continue on the downslide.

Is the problem mass movement, or is the problem that this is a mass movement that doesn't move?

A bit of both. The whole history of politics is about power. That means it has been male-dominated, because the values you require to be able to handle power are male values: they're about confrontation, the triumph of the powerful, the division of labour, hierarchical structures, inflexibility. But we may now have reached the apex of the power ramp. We have now invented the ultimate power: the power to destroy ourselves. The future of our society is going to be about different values, about the resolution of conflict, flexibility, moving in and out of formal work. They seem to be pre-eminently female values.

Would you put that argument as readily to Question Time, or Any Questions? In a mainstream milieu, we don't hear it.

You don't hear it, because you don't actually ever get time to articulate that kind of idea. Which is one of the problems about politics today. I very, very rarely get a chance to sit down and talk philosophically.

What do you feel about becoming the leader of a political party at a time when there's a very butch expectation of party leaders. You have to have a unanimous party. The terms of all that are set by the stalinist standing ovation that Margaret Thatcher gets, and pathological loyalty. You have had to prove that you can push your party around, and sort out the 'bearded sandal-wearers'. Do you agree that that is what has happened during the 1980s?

Yes, but one of the most powerful things happening is that the Tories are looking much more to Hurd, to a more traditional view of leadership. My own party has unity. But it is not because I have imposed it. We have arrived at a set of conclusions we all agree with.

There is no doubt about it that the party constitution is more leadership-oriented than the old Liberal Party's constitution was. That was not of my invention, but I wouldn't say I am unhappy about it.

When we constructed this office here at the Commons, quite deliberately I put in a majority who had voted against the merger. Two of us voted for it. I've seen this office as a catalyst between two warring factions of the party, and insisted that they talk to each other. Our Policy Committee contains absolutely opposite spectrums of the Party.

Are you duller than you were?

I think I would be very sad if that was the case. I don't think you can reasonably say that to someone who has been prepared to take the position we took over Hong Kong. I'm not sure it's dull to say we may have to put up income tax if we're going to make the investments the country needs. I'm not sure it's dull to say we're going to have to put up ex-power station prices to save the environment. But if you could legitimately make the charge that I'm duller, then that would be very serious.

What accounted for the extraordinary success at Eastbourne?

I played down Eastbourne. I said after Eastbourne, it's not something to get hyper-ventilated about.

Your eye is more fixed to 1996, 1997?

Yes. A party that will develop its full potential in the middle of this decade. The ingredients in Eastbourne were the protest vote, a first class candidate, and thirdly the Party was not as low as the opinion polls said. I confess with humility, that Eastbourne took me by surprise. I should have listened to the words of our professionals.

Now people's party allegiances are not fixed, nor determined by their housing tenure, or their occupation, people's identity is seen as fluid. What is the function then of a political party, if it is not to express given interests?

Ah, but it is to express that.

Given, ready-made?

No. That's the interesting thing. The class basis is gone from British politics. I don't say that class is gone from Britain, but the class base, as the prime foundation of political parties, is gone. Thatcher probably broke it. Labour has gone on playing the class game long after it was actually credible, although Neil Kinnock is trying to break out of it.

We thought we were going to sit comfortably on this raft of social progress, and it would take us smoothly and effortlessly on an elevator up to power. We forgot that we had to have some intellectual rigour, and courage, and consistency in what we were doing. She just blew us out of the water.

Political parties have driven their taproots into ideas and interests. I don't want this party to be just a repository for the protest vote, for people who are temporarily dissatisfied with their own party. I want to build something solid, around people interested in the new emerging ecumenism, the resolution of conflict, the quality of life, not the quantity of your material possessions, in consensual structures, in citizenship, in the importance of the environment, in internationalism.

What's your constituency? Where does it live?

We don't have our laagers but at the moment it's more to be found in the south than the north. That's something we have to correct. It's a 1990s person – it recognises the equality of women; Europeanism is absolutely essential, it's important to preserve the environment.

What would the implications be for the dreaded pact? If the resistance to Thatcherism in the south is aligned to you, and in the north to the new model Labour Party, then the composition of a non-Tory government will be contingent on some kind of arrangement between the Liberal Democrats and Labour? Even if you're not going to enter the smoke-filled rooms before the election...

Well, we're not: let me tell you that absolutely straight. We're not, because I don't think it's democratic, but chiefly because I don't think it would work. It's not up to me to decide. It's up to the electorate. What I have to turn my mind to is...

Who are you going to do business with?

Well, it isn't a question of who. You don't know, this is the problem. It's going to be one or the other, Tory or Labour, but you're very unlikely to have both options open. And that leaves you with a number of very difficult problems. But I do think that decision is taken for you by the electorate.

It's not always the case that it would be either to our benefit or to Britain's that we should work inside a coalition government, rather than sit on the Opposition benches and exercise our power on a case-by-case basis.●

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Robert Taylor on the fate of Swedish social democracy

Swedish Models

Social-Democratic Sweden has been an understandable inspiration for the Left ever since the 1930s, when it appeared to have found the democratic answer to mass unemployment through the use of demand management economics. Over the years a diverse range of Labour Party figures have waxed lyrical over the virtues of what became known as the Swedish model, a successful socially regulated market economy based on a compromise between the needs of private capital and the demands of organised labour.

Even today socialists around the world look to Sweden as an example of how to reconcile the existence of a huge and generous welfare state founded on universalist principles of provision with a manufacturing sector which can compete effectively on world markets.

Revisionists in particular have been heavily influenced in debates over the role of nationalisation in socialist ideology by a Swedish pragmatism that seemed principled in its commitment to equality and social justice, but did not make a fetish out of the ownership of the means of production, distribution and exchange.

But there are increasing signs that the days of social democratic hegemony are drawing to a close in Sweden. It is not just that the party has dropped to only around a 32% approval rating in the opinion polls and shows no signs of electoral recovery with only nine months before the next general election.

Many of the fundamental ideas that lie at the heart of the Swedish example have lost their resonance in a rapidly changing Swedish society, which is growing more sensitive to both the internationalisation of the country's economy and the rise of a much more individualistic attitude to life.

A recent major study of democracy and power in Sweden commissioned by the government concluded that 'the period of Sweden's history which was characterised by a strong public sector expansion, centralised collective agreements, social engineering and centrally planned solutions is over'.

Ever since the heyday of the model in the 1960s, successive governments have found it progressively harder to make it work.

The social consensus that bound the Swedes together derived from a degree of self-discipline, respect for paternalistic authority and belief in the virtue of large organisations. These have been slowly eroded by the impact of countervailing cultural pressures stressing decentralising solutions, self-help rather than dependence on bureaucracy, and above all a sense of individual fulfilment through expressions of personal freedom rather than public provision.

None of this means that Swedish social democracy cannot adapt to such changes. Indeed, much of its success has come from an uncanny ability to accommodate its basic core of beliefs with different trends in society, which might seem to be inherently hostile to their practice.

There is an eloquent chapter in the party's programme for the 1990s that seeks to find a synthesis between the individualistic and collectivist tendencies in Swedish society. What this attempts to do is place human needs at the centre of social democratic ideology.

It argues: 'The duty of politicians is to try and shape the conditions so that every individual can realise the dreams and aspirations of both themselves and their loved ones.' But it stresses that there is a severe limitation on how far politics can go in this objective. What social democracy must do is create the conditions in society to enable people to choose their own lifestyles.

The party programme admits the huge welfare state created over the past 50 years has become impersonal, that it has taken over many responsibilties from families and individuals, thereby making them less socially responsible, helpless and alienated. It is concerned that social democracy is seen as synonymous by many Swedes with the overpowerful state.

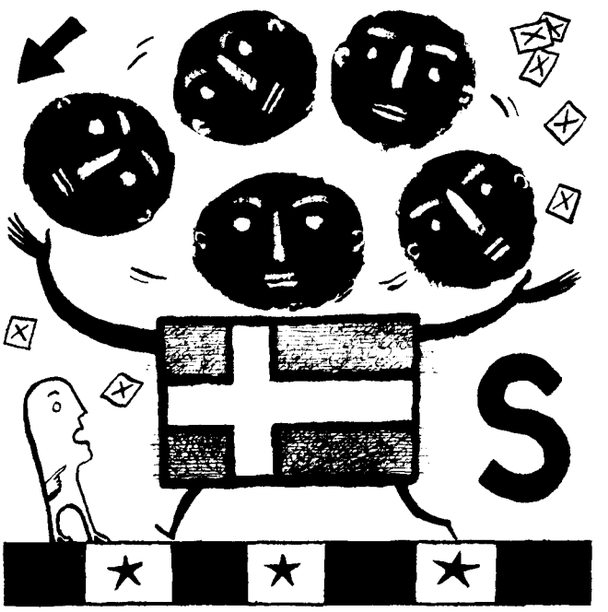
But the document also seeks to redefine equality and social justice in such a way as to reconcile them with the encouragement of diversity in freedom. It is the very success of social democratic welfare policies that has narrowed income and other differences in Sweden between people, creating the foundations upon which they can each achieve their own self-development.

Of course, there is an obvious danger in Sweden, as elsewhere, that social democracy ceases to have any meaning distinct from the maintenance of liberal values. In a recent study of the party's political thought, Professor Tim Tilton highlighted what he saw as the distinctive characteristics of its ideology and their translation into policy aims – full employment; universal social welfare provision; industrial democracy; egalitarian wage policy; active labour market strategy; and a belief in collective capital formation.

Today, as Sweden heads into recession, these admirable objectives are in danger of being abandoned. In the past the social democrats won admiration in their own country, not just for their competence in government but because they had the self-confidence, the elan to take the initiative, to dominate the public debate. Now the party is very much on the defensive. It has begun to question its own ability to survive.

'The social democrats won admiration in their own country, not just for competence in government but because they had the self-confidence, the elan to take the initiative'

But nobody should doubt that it can still draw on its own internal ideological resources to mount a counter-attack of ideas. Socialists outside Sweden may have an out-dated view of what is happening in the country, but they can still examine with value the current debate in social democracy. After all, many of the market and liberalising pressures reshaping Swedish society are also making an impact across western Europe. In the search for a new, credible social democracy, Sweden may have lessons after all even if the famous model is now more myth than reality.●



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PREVIEW

Alison Whyte investigates World Aids Day

Condom Culture

Tessa Boffin, 'Angelic Rebels: Lesbians and Safer Sex' 1989, from *Ecstatic Antibodies* (Rivers Oram Press)

Angelic Rebels: Cutting out the laborious negotiations with men

When the dust has settled, what will be the impact of World Aids Day (December 1) on women, the subject of this year's theme? If you stop to think, it is a strange idea to dedicate one day in the year to a disease. It does make sense in media terms, providing a focus for documentary programme makers, feature editors and copywriters. But why women?

It is true that since Aids first came to public notice in the mid-80s, many women have believed they wouldn't be affected. Too much emphasis was placed on the fact that, in Britain, the groups most affected were gay men and intravenous drug users, and too little on Aids as a syndrome that already decimated entire generations in some African countries.

There are specific ways in which HIV and Aids have an impact on women. Purely in terms of prevention, women need to know what safer sex means for them, whatever their sexuality. And there are particular issues relating to pregnancy and childbirth. Not least, it is women who for the most part are carers, whether as mothers, friends, buddies or health workers. But there already exist channels through which women can be reached.

Some workers in the Aids field are privately cynical about the reasons behind putting the spotlight on women. Women, they say, are a soft option. It is easier to sympathise with a woman and child; a woman seems vulnerable, perhaps even 'innocent'. But it's not just about trying to raise public sympathy for people with Aids in the same way that some charities focus on starving babies to fundraise for people facing food shortages.

Women are being asked to carry the can, or the condom to be more precise. Women have always had to take the pill, wear diaphragms and lug around pessaries and spermicidal jelly. Now they have to put the condoms on as well. Women are to learn to be more assertive. We're all in favour of that. But how realistic is it to imagine that women of all ages and all backgrounds and with varying sexual experience can assert themselves in this one aspect of their relationships?

We are told that sexual relations between gay men have undergone some kind of metamorphosis. What is perceived as erotic, exciting and pleasurable has been transformed out of necessity and the whole game (not just the rules) has been changed. Organisations like the Terrence Higgins Trust which reach out to the gay community have produced intensely alluring and erotic posters featuring safer sex.

There is an assumption that among heterosexuals, in the context of a caring, monogamous relationship, safer sex will be lovingly negotiated. There is also a myth that the greatest threat of Aids to heterosexual men comes from prostitutes (and by implication, 'loose women'). It seems that the opposite is true. When women see sex as a commodity or just a purely pleasurable activity, they are

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Cherry Smyth previews three films which have Aids taped

Video Voices

more likely to insist that their partners take precautions. Surveys of attitudes among prostitutes have shown that most prostitutes insist on condoms, but they are put under enormous pressure by some clients to dispense with them.

It's when our glasses get steamed up with love, romance and desire that all knowledge goes out of the window and rashness comes in. Ceri Hutton, who is employed by the National Aids Trust and is armed to the teeth with facts about HIV and Aids, bravely admitted in a recent article that in the dim, warm light of the night, negotiation is in opposition to 'going with the flow'. She is not alone. The prediction by some feminists that out of the tragedy of Aids, new, 'negotiated', sensual heterosexual relationships would evolve like some phoenix out of the ashes, seems not to have come about.

Most of us, well-informed or not, still seem to tumble blindly down the slippery slope to unsafe sex. What will break through this stubborn insistence on our part to see safer sex as boring, the opposite of a thrilling and exotic experience? Certainly not the new poster campaign by the Health Education Authority in which a man's and a woman's legs with what looks like slippered feet, dangle uninvitingly over a couch with the heading, 'Should I use a condom with my new partner?'

Even if after World Aids Day, women were better informed and determined to be more assertive, they would still have to negotiate with heterosexual men whose attitudes have remained largely unchanged. When are men, who still wield the power in most heterosexual relationships and on whom the condoms have to be put, going to be put on the spot? Frankie Lynch, who works on women's issues at the Terrence Higgins Trust, fears that next year the theme of World Aids Day will be children: 'Then everyone will have had a turn, except the group which needs it most.'●

To coincide with World Aids Day, the ICA is presenting a special programme of Aids activist tapes which includes work by women. Most of the women and Aids images to date have presented women as carers or prostitutes and although there are women in the recent quilt project film, *Common Threads*, none of those who are closely commemorated in the film were women. So it is encouraging to see three US tapes which celebrate women as fighters in Aids activism.

The first, *Safe Sex Slut*, is a three-minute pop promo, whose title promises more than it can give. 'In a movie , in a car , in the bathroom, in a bar....safe sex...dah nan na...safe sex... ', belts out the large, raucous Scarlot Harlot, apparently 'a tireless advocate of safer sex for prostitutes'. This is hardly self-evident as she blows up a condom and romps through another sloppy and uninformative verse.

***Cori, A Struggle for Life*, by contrast, is a mother's testimony to the death of her first child from Aids, contracted from a blood transfusion in 1982, when she was six months old. Originally diagnosed as suffering from cerebral palsy, the baby was given extensive neurological tests until Aids was confirmed. 'Where are the specialists? I'll take her to the best', declares the mother, only to learn that nothing can be done.**

The mother, Nina Sobell, addresses the camera directly in a tough and unemotive fashion. Home movies of Cori and contemporary news footage tell of the pain and isolation of mother and daughter as fear and ignorance mount. The tape also recounts Nina's own anger and blame towards gay men, and her eventual support from Gay Men's Health Crisis, who provide her with a volunteer and the information she fails to find elsewhere. The intrusive voice-over of a concerned narrator and looseness of the editing do not detract from the powerful simplicity of this account.

Hot from the San Francisco Lesbian and Gay Festival comes *DiAna's Hair Ego* – a sheer delight. In among the shampoo, curlers, hot tongs, wax and gel, lie several thousand gift-wrapped condoms. Deep from the heart of the black community in Bible-belted South Carolina, DiAna sent off for information about Aids which she spread out in her beauty salon. The customers began to talk, and listen.

DiAna went on to found the South Carolina Aids Education Network (SCAEN) which held fundraisers in churches and video screenings in colleges. She also established safe-sex parties in her parlour and an office in her living room.

These are the real Steel Magnolias. Unlike the dry, anatomical local Health Education lectures, DiAna launched sex talks which involve team-games and hands-on experimentation – how many uses are there for a condom without the penis?

Run by volunteers, SCAEN has now trained over 8,000 people about Aids-related issues and no doubt enlivened many a sex life in the process. It is refreshing to see articulate, working-class black women making space to break taboos and taking credit for their courage. The thrill of *DiAna's Hair Ego* comes from the energy and inventiveness of their education campaigns. At a time of moral backlash against sex education, it is heartening that grass roots networks are still thriving regardless.●

Chris Boot and Crispin Hughes, 'Treatment' from *Ecstatic Antibodies* (Rivers Oram Press)

Crossed Eye: The Aids crisis through a camera lens

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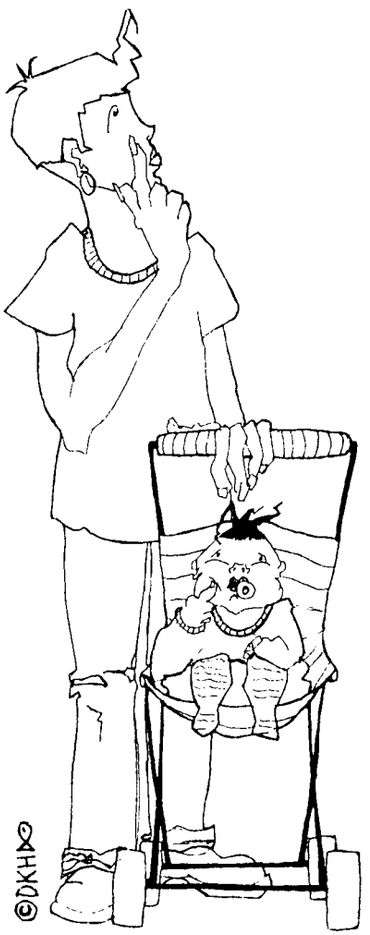
IF YOU WERE BORN AFTER 1957.....



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■ *I would like to join/start a group that explores the politics for New Times*

■ *I am at _____college*

■ *I would like more information about the Communist Party*

■ *I am interested in education, culture, black politics, the environment, women's politics, international issues, student politics, lesbian and gay politics, Marxism Today discussion groups, disabled politics, constitutional reform..*

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*Address*_____

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Suzanne Moore

Photography: Josh Pulman

The age of media anxiety

And Now The News

What I am about to say is not very important. It just feels like it is. Because this is what 'the media' is so good at – self-importance. The media is all-powerful and all-seeing. We know it is. Because the media tells us that this is the case. And despite the recession, newspapers, magazines and tv programmes breed like there was no tomorrow. Even if there isn't you can be sure that the next series of *Tomorrow's World* is already in the can anyway.

There are more tv channels, more adverts, more print than anyone could ever hope for. Only connect – to BSB/Sky or Astra. Bank with First Direct but only because of the ads. Video *Twin Peaks* and watch it while you are reading the *Independent On Saturday* on Sunday afternoon. Pile up the *Sunday Times*, *Correspondent* and *News Of The World* until Monday. Give up your job so that you can stay at home for the repeat of *Knott's Landing* and *Take The High Road*. Rob a bank so that you can afford to see *Total Recall*, *Flatliners* and the re-released Bresson film. Kill your partner so that you have time to read all the novels on the Booker shortlist as well as *Viz* on a regular basis.

Does all this make you feel better? More alive? More at the centre of things? If it does you are suffering from *media anxiety*. Information saturation is taking its toll. There is only one cure. Switch off. And thank god that seems to be what a lot of us are doing. After decades of predictions concerning the unlimited power of the mass media, even television – always held up triumphantly as the most influential medium of all – is starting to lose its grip.

We have more choice than ever before, with the result that both here and in the States we are viewing less and less, as BSB knows to its cost. Reports from the Henley Centre for Forecasting and the Policy Studies Institute show an overall decrease in the average number of hours we spend watching tv.

Instead we are hiring more videos and going to the cinema more often or maybe, just maybe, participating in leisure activities that have nothing to do with the media at all. BBC chiefs may blame the decline on the hot summer rather than admitting that the revival of *The Generation Game* is hardly the stuff to get the nation's adrenalin racing. But is it really possible that television will go the way of radio and become either a quaint and reassuring medium or simply an ambient visual prop? Imagine no more telly – I wonder if you can.

Yet one of the simple facts ignored by media men from McLuhan to Michael Grade is that we only have so many hours in a day. Am I the only person to find it reassuring that as the Sunday papers continue to reproduce and mutate into more and more sections that the general response has been mass apathy? Nobody with the semblance of a life could possibly read all this stuff. Which is why if you meet anyone who claims they do, you can be sure that they already work in the media.

Whether this is the kind of implosion into the meaningless babble of self-referential signs that post-modern theorists love to wallow in, is debatable. What is certain is that they usually link this condition with consumer passivity. Yesterday's couch potatoes don the Emperor's new clothes to become Baudrillard's 'Silent Majorities'. The model for all this is America. Not America the Real – a place of startling diversity – but America the Imaginary, a place where a giant hypodermic regularly injects the population with endless Big Macs, MTV and Oral Roberts. What such snobbery ignores is not only the way that we produce our own disposable culture – one of the few manufacturing bases left unscathed – but also the way we consume it.

The pessimism inherent in such work on the media often assumes its unlimited power as well as underestimating our ability to make choices. We may be offered simply more of the same but does that mean that we always take it? Ask the sales reps for BSB who had so much trouble flogging a dish a day. Yet for those in the grip of media anxiety, more choice also means more chance of missing something relevant. This is actually a strain of industrial illness that affects journalists and tv folk alike. It may feel real but it is actually a psychosomatic disease that eventually paralyses the ability to distinguish between what is important and what is not.

As it reaches epidemic proportions the result right across the board is that tv stations, newspapers and advertisers are spending an awful lot of money trying to brand their particular identity on to our consciousness. It may all look the same but we are meant to believe that one satellite channel is vastly different from another. Hence all the logos, vague commercials for corporations that you have never heard of and the trend in advertising that pretends it is actually anti-advertising: the First Direct campaign is a prime example, or the ads for Molson lager which tell you *not* to drink it.

Out of the estimated six thousand advertising messages each of us receives daily, it is only the unusual or unexpected that stand out. Likewise it is important that we remember what channel that programme we saw last night was on. If we don't, the corporate image is just not coming on strong enough. The money that could go into making great television programmes goes instead into making brilliant graphics that fill in the slots between the programmes or ads for Sky. Which is precisely the reason why so many of us can look at the paper and say quite casually: 'there is nothing on telly tonight. Nothing at all.'●

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Reasons To Believe

From David White, Director of Social Services, Nottingham County Council

I have read with interest Beatrix Campbell's article (*MT* November) in which she attacks the procedures of the joint police/social services enquiry into allegations of ritual abuse in Nottinghamshire, and profoundly disagree with many of the points she makes (while of course accepting her right to make them).

I have just submitted a report to the county council's social services committee, in an attempt to draw together all the threads of this complex situation and to signpost possible constructive moves in the future. In this report I have pointed out that, whilst I initially accepted the conclusions of the joint enquiry team that ritual abuse was not associated with the Broxtowe case, I do now feel, on the basis of the strength of the children's testimony, that it would be unwise not to accept the possibility that there were ritualistic elements to this case.

While I cannot definitely state the nature and extent of this abuse, having read the diaries of several abused children (contrary to Ms Campbell's allegation of dismissal) I am satisfied that neither the social workers or foster parents could have influenced the children to such an extent.

The child, as a person, must occupy and continue to occupy centre stage, and nothing will be allowed to interfere with that. As I state in my report, one of my major concerns is that certain entrenched positions are in danger of becoming ideological battlefields which are deflecting energies towards the argument at the expense of joint and co-operative action which is needed to protect children.

The difficulties in the working relationships between some parts of the social services department and some parts of the police force arise from definitions of working terms. The police need proof 'beyond all reasonable doubt', while the social worker acts on a looser basis of 'probability'.

Moreover, it is possible that the media coverage of this disparity may have weakened public confidence in the council's ability to protect children at risk. In this particular case, however, the children were effectively and successfully protected by the efforts of both the social workers and the police officers.

Let me reiterate that the defence of children, rather than that of a particular ideological position, is our prime concern. It is the exclusive moral responsibility of all staff, managers and child protection agencies to provide protection for them.●

From Dr Sebastian Kraemer, Consultant Psychiatrist at the Tavistock Clinic

In Beatrix Campbell's excellent piece (*MT* October), she makes the fundamental point that society is capable of deafness when what is said by powerless citizens is too disgusting and disturbing to hear. There is a risk, however, that she will be seen to be attacking one part of the child protection system (the police) selectively, rather than understanding how these appalling disclosures inevitably create splitting at every level, from mental to social.

An article in *The Mail On Sunday* on October 21 1990 'proved' conclusively to its own satisfaction that there was no such thing as satanic or ritual abuse, both by disqualifying the children's accounts as fantasy and by exposing the divisions between professional workers who have to deal with these cases. Such polarisation is now familiar and is of course reflected at a national level by the arguments raging in the press, along fairly predictable party lines.

What is not appreciated, however, is *how the split originates in the children themselves*. Because of the response they get when they begin to tell of their experiences, sexually abused children tend to disclose in piecemeal fashion, which is often quite unconvincing. Some reach the stage of retracting their allegations or, worse, telling deliberate lies to cover up the truth. In a classic paper this phenomenon has been described by Dr Roland Summit as the 'Child Sexual Abuse Accommodation Syndrome' (*Child Abuse And Neglect, 1983*). The children cannot bear the truth and may even manage, from time to time, to convince themselves that it did not happen after all.

With a new level of depravity now being revealed, all the old process of denial and disqualification – essentially the shooting of the messenger who brings unacceptable news – are returning. Those who feel that children have already been granted far too much credibility, and should be punished for publicly humiliating their parents, can now sink back with relief in the knowledge that they are just little liars after all. Whichever view you take, it is a step back into the dark ages.●

From Jenny Kendrick of the Association of Child Psychotherapists

Beatrix Campbell's article (*MT* November) highlights how hard it is for adults to think about and respond appropriately to the horrific child abuse cases that have been revealed in Rochdale and Nottingham.

Time is spent conjecturing whether children could really have experienced such abuse; it seems too dreadful for adults to think about, so the children must have made it up. That can sometimes be true. For when reality is too much to bear, a flight to fantasy and exaggeration can be a way to find some defence. So too can be a retreat into mindlessness, seen by some to be madness, where nothing has power any more to cause much pain.

Our task is to try to help these children to come to terms with the fact of living in an adult world which has betrayed all adult values, and to find trust again in relationships. It can take months before these children can find, through play and the most subtle communications of their states of mind, the words to express their true experiences. First, they must feel safe. It is wonderful that the Nottingham children were able to build up such trust with their dedicated foster parents that they were able to find the words to describe their experiences to them.

There is evidence that many children who have been sexually abused by perverse adults become abusers in their turn. Rather than dissipating energies and resources in wrangling about the politics of abuse, it must surely be a priority that children are given every opportunity to rebuild trust and confidence in themselves. For it is clear that, whatever the truth of the detail in what the children have said, something terrible has happened, and they need help.●

Oil Slick

The Gulf crisis (*MT* November) encapsulates most of the problems – political, economic, religious, nationalist, militarist – of the 20th century. Despite George Bush's denials, it is about the control of oil in particular and raw materials in general.

President Bush, with a bankrupt economy and inflated military capacity, is clearly intent on war, hoping it will give him control of the oil so essential to the economy of the USA. Though the conflict is nominally to be conducted in the name of the United Nations, Bush, aided and abetted by Thatcher, has already shrugged off UN control and exposed once more the inability of the UN to enforce its decisions.

Raw material and the products of the earth must be the property not of individuals or nation states, but of the whole human race, used only in ways that will not deplete their resources nor damage the planet (nor, indeed, any other planet).

Then, as Thatcher says, we should take steps to ensure that no chemical, biological and nuclear weapons can any longer be used by Iraq... and Israel, South Africa, the USSR, Great Britain and the USA. Is this too much to hope for in the 21st century?●

R G Sargent, Cornwall

Hairy Problem

As a man with a beard, I find it rather disturbing that Sue Vice (*MT* November) seems to find that men with beards are ganging up on her.

While not an absolute guarantee of ideological soundness, beards and radicalism have a long connection. After all, while Marx, Engels and Lenin all had one, Stalin only had a moustache. Always a dubious sign.

The connection dates back at least to the late 1850s, when there was a beard movement associated with the Newcastle school of post-Chartist radicalism. Based on strictly material roots (facilities for shaving were lacking in many working-class households without light and running water), it, and similar movements like that of the turkish bath, sprang up in the wake of the collapse of Chartism, as class views of society were challenged.

Sounds just like the kind of thing *MT* would have supported!●

Keith Flett, London

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School For Scandal

Now that the memory of their political victory over militant teachers and progressive educators is fading, the Tory 'achievement' in education looks more threadbare by the week. Brian Simon (*MT* November) is right to point to the opportunities this opens for an alternative based on rational planning and democracy.

It's a sign of the times that he has to end his piece not with a rallying call, but with a question: 'Will Labour seize its opportunity?' It's a question worth pursuing. Of course, at the level of general principle, Labour's statements are full of the need for quality and modernisation; it's in the small print that the problems start.

If we have anything to learn from the Tories in education, it's in the way they have been able to relate general positions to detailed, ingenious policy. Starting from powerful ideological themes of 'race' and 'nation', and of the failure of a 'producer-dominated' socialism to meet people's needs, they have developed a fine mesh of legislation: on the curriculum, the working lives of teachers, and on the mechanisms by which education can be subjected to market forces.

In many ways, Labour hasn't come to terms with this success, being part-impressed, part-repelled. Its policies in education are an unsettled mix of modernising, egalitarian planning, and borrowed bits of the Conservatives' programme, whose detail is out of line with the best of the purposes it claims to serve. We can see this very clearly by looking at three areas where Conservatism has had its greatest impact.

Firstly, the teachers, who are living through an experience of defeat: cuts, weakened unions and a workload which is reaching the impossible make it difficult for them to play a creative educational role. Yet Labour, by stressing the need for teacher assessment, for testing even more frequent than that brought in by the Tories, and by announcing to all that it will keep the teaching unions 'at arm's length' is doing little to rebuild their energies.

Secondly, the national curriculum is based on neglect of those factors of class, of race and of gender which most affect educational achievement. Labour has no plans for rethinking it in any fundamental way. And lastly, no plans are developed for accountability other than those founded on regular testing and consumer preference. The democratic dimension, so rightly stressed by Simon, is absent.

Labour's programme may well get it elected. But in many respects it poses problems whose successful resolution can only be the result of further 'battles over education'.●

Ken Jones, London

Man Power

I agree with Anna Marie Smith's comment (Forum, *MT* November) that men's support is needed for feminist work on unequal pay, job discrimination, sexual violence and harassment, and the unequal distribution of child care and housework.

This conclusion begs the question of why so much attention is given to campaigns for legislation on pornography when there is an urgent need for the Equal Pay Act And Sex Discrimination Act of 1975 to be revised and updated. Do feminists and 'right-on' men (white, employed and well-educated?) find it easier to ponder the morality of pornographic displays than to address the more crucial issues of sexual inequality in the home, in education, on the street and in the workplace?

Radical changes have taken place in the British labour market since 1975, with increasing numbers of poor women taking up part-time, low-grade, low paid employment which remains non-unionised and not subject to scrutiny by wages inspectors. The introduction of the social fund and the freezing of other benefits have forced many women to enter the informal labour economy where they are exploited as cheap labour.

The Wages Act of 1986 reduced the rights of women workers even further by denying workers rights to pay packet protections. Women in both the public and the private sectors continue to be subject to discrimination on the basis of age, marital status, maternal status and sexuality.

In 1983, Jo Richardson MP introduced a Sex Equality bill which would have amended the Sex Discrimination Act. The proposals included provision for part-time and home-workers and a broadening of the definition of sex discrimination to include discrimination on the grounds of gender, marital status and sexual orientation. The bill failed in its second reading.

Even had it succeeded, legislation alone cannot solve the problems of unequal pay and the low status of women in the job market. The way paid work is currently organised and structured needs to change so that activities such as caring for children and the sick and elderly come to be highly valued and adequately remunerated. This would help to change the division of labour between men and women both in the home and in the wider economy.

Instead of navel gazing, men who wish to participate in feminism should read up on the legislation, obtain information from the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Low Pay Unit, ask for advice from local women's groups, form an Equal Pay For Equal Work group and join their local trades council. They can also write to their MPs, MEPs, local borough and county councillors and raise the issues with partners at home and companions at work.●

Kathleen McMullen, Brighton

Cartoon: Nick Newman

Smugging Up

Marxism Today can ill-afford vacuity of the order of Suzanne Moore's article (*MT* October). As a witty exposé of 'self-flagellating ex-wankers', it was mildly entertaining; as a serious criticism of male feminism and the Campaign Against Pornography And Censorship it was devoid of logic and misleading.

Ms Moore refers to the above activists as 'pro-censorship' and 'moralistic'. I wonder if disapproval of child porn also falls into those dread categories? Most worrying, though, is her creation of new stereotypes, each precisely crafted for maximum laughs, none based on any realistic appraisal of the people she intends to confront.

Please can we have less smug cleverness, and more clear debate?●

Adam Hibbert, London

Green Machine

The political agenda is beginning to recognise the importance of environmental protection and thus to introduce new concepts into the political vocabulary: Fred Steward (*MT* November) identifies these changes.

What the traditional political parties are currently trying to do is to graft green policies onto the stems of their old credos – a difficult process. A green state has to look to more horizontal structures of co-operation, and more points of access to the decision-making system, through formal 'agencies' and citizens' initiatives.

I do not believe that the traditional parties will be able to break free from their historical baggage. A political realignment is required to succeed, and it must happen fast.●

Jean Lambert, Green Party

Editorial Note:

We welcome your letter to add to discussion. Please send them to *MT* Letters, 6-9 Cynthia Street, London N1 9JF. Brevity means you are more likely to be published. We reserve the right to cut.●

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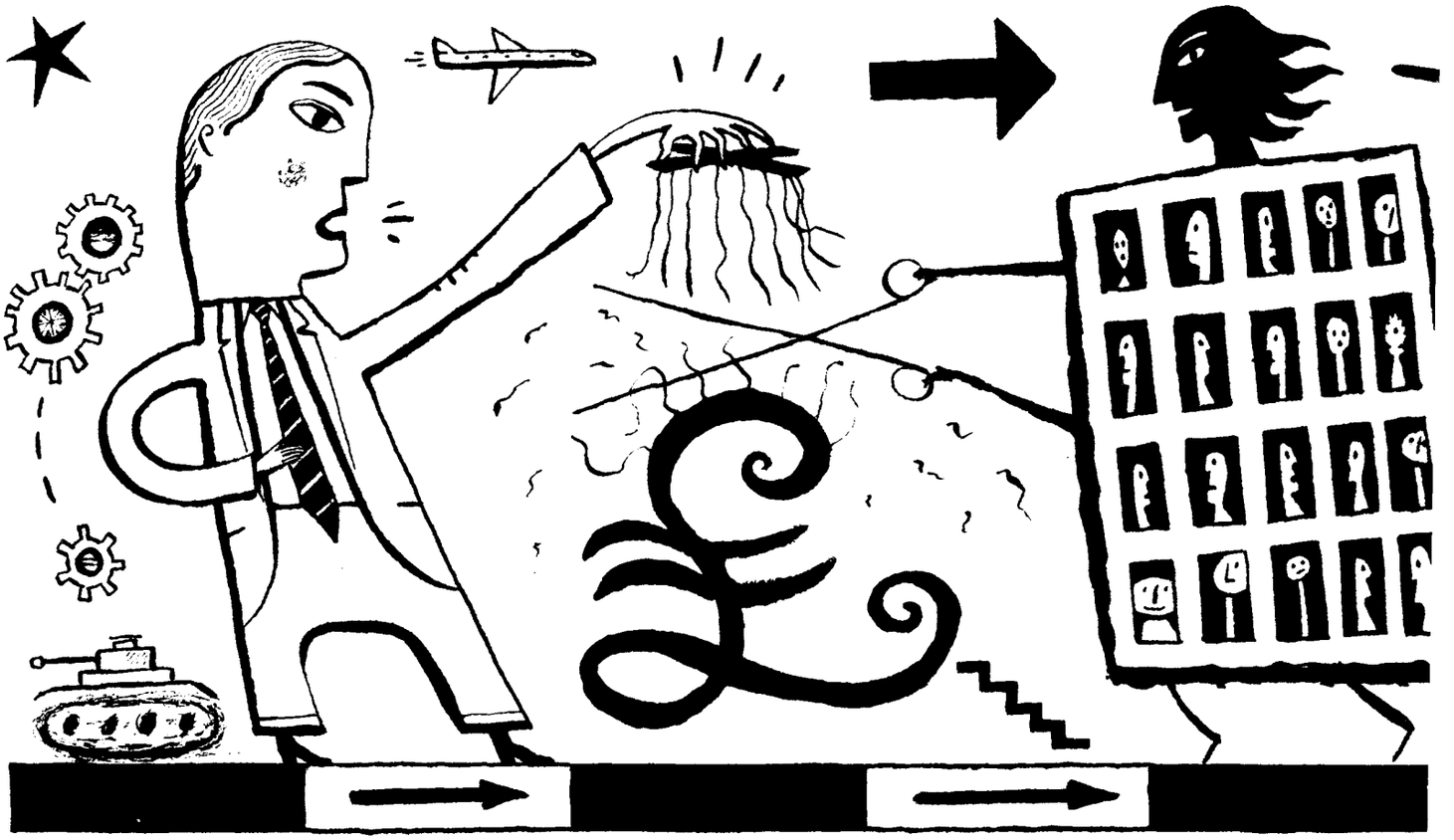

Future Of Europe

Making Sense Of Europe

Later this month, the Intergovernmental Conference on monetary union and political reform in the European Community commences its work. Their outcome could have a profound impact on the future shape of the EC. **Ralf Dahrendorf** examines the prospects and warns against both blind insularity and Euro-idealism

It is necessary these days, after the Rome summit, and the resignation of Sir Geoffrey Howe, to begin with first principles. This is also easy. Britain is a European country. Meanwhile, other links remain important. The Commonwealth may be largely symbolic, but it represents an opportunity for promoting civilised development and co-operation over many parts of the world. Remnants of the special relationship with the United States survive; they may even serve a a useful reminder to the European Community of its wider obligations. For Europe is not everything, far from it. Britons may well have a better sense of the world-wide prerequisites of peace and prosperity than some other Europeans. Britain has thus a special responsibility when it comes to respect for the United Nations, or for Gatt. But one thing Britain can no longer do, and that is try and pursue its national interest by going it alone. Britain's national interest has, in important respects, become a European interest. Whoever fails to recognise this fact is serving the country badly by turning it into a pathetic irrelevance at the margin of history.

So far so good. It is a sad comment on Britain's political culture that these first principles still need to be spelt out. For the real debate is much more important, and also more difficult: which Europe? How does the European Community relate to the European aspirations of Britain and others? What are the next steps forward, and who should be invited to join? In the face of such questions the going gets rougher, and one must beware of confusing the European

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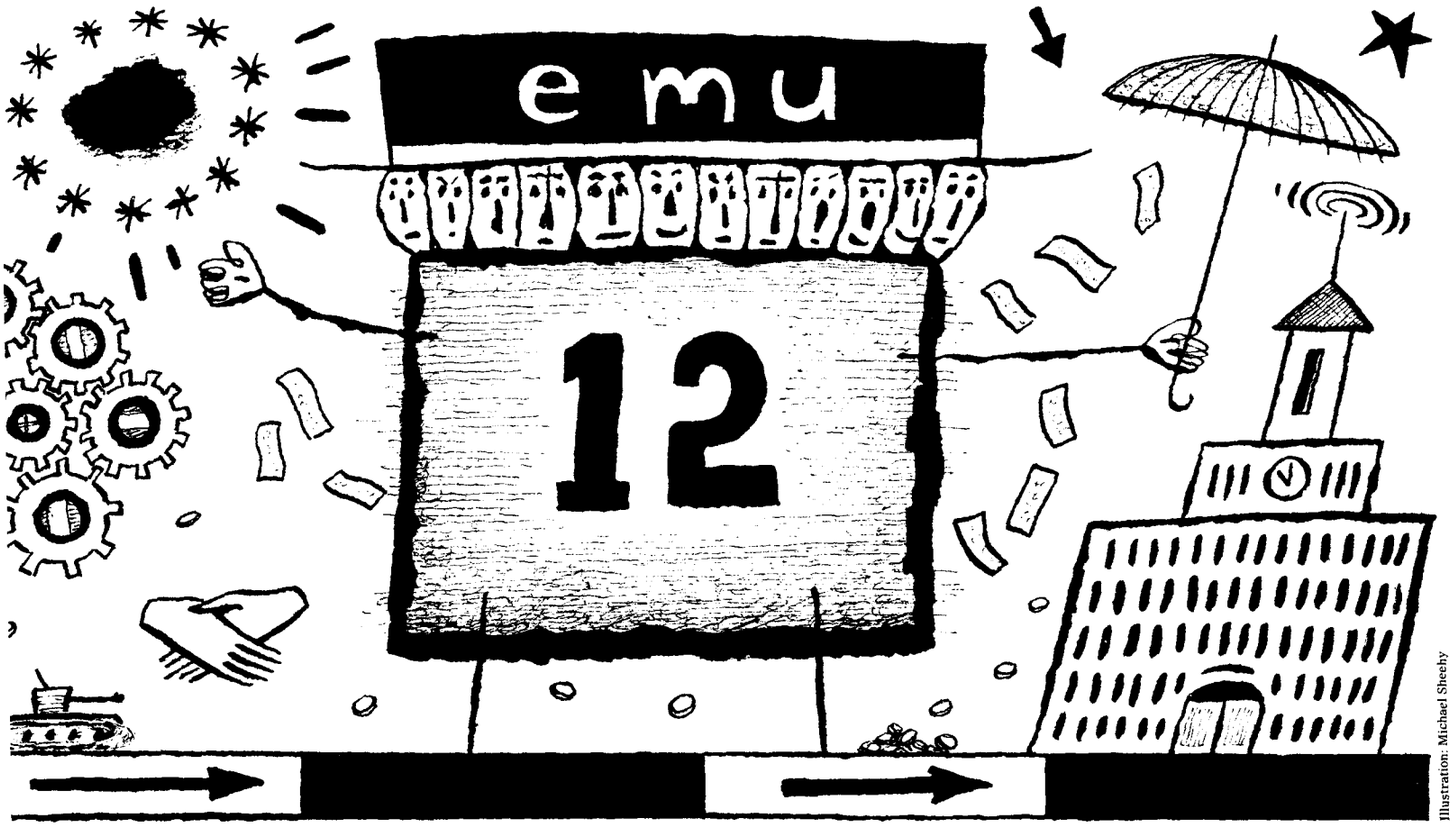

Illustration: Michael Sheehy

destiny with the realities or even the received wisdom of the day.

The European Community as we see it today is in many respects a very unsatisfactory animal. Its 12 members hardly form a relevant economic or political space. No self-respecting business would regard Greece and Portugal as its market, but leave out Austria and Sweden, and so far as democracy and the rule of law go, the Council of Europe is a better definition of 'Europe' than the EC. Moreover, the EC seems best suited to do the dirty work for its members which they prefer not to do at home. It is well-versed in the game of protection and subsidies, as the latest episode of European agriculture shows which may yet lead to the demise of GATT. As a club, the EC is above all exclusive: you do not get much for being inside, but you pay a heavy price for being left out in the cold. Many a contract has gone to EC companies although bids of at least equal promise were made by EFTA members. The institutions of the EC are, to put it mildly, puzzling. They are Cartesian rather than democratic, and even as tidy Cartesian constructions they have by now been bent and twisted in many less logical ways.

And yet this deeply imperfect European Community is the best we have when we talk about Europe. Unless we want to start again from scratch, we must make it work. Making it work means getting it to move forward in directions which correspond to the interests of its members and thus of Britain.

Leaving doctrine on one side, two such directions are presently under discussion. As it happens, they concern the two central areas of politics, arms and money. Perhaps it sounds less belligerent to say foreign policy and economic policy. In foreign and security policy, there is not much sign of progress. One may also wonder whether an organisation which has been set up for trade and economic co-operation is actually capable of shifting its priorities to such an extent that it turns into a defence community. In any case, important mem-bers of the EC interpret their international interests very differently. In the Iraq crisis, Britain seems to favour war, Germany seems to favour appeasement, and France seems to favour a posture which leaves its position in the region unimpaired whatever happens. President Mitterrand has recently made it clear to Chancellor Kohl that he does not wish to see any German soldiers on French soil, and that security co-operation has to be dealt with else where.

The habit of political co-operation – even Political Co-operation with capital letters – is not to be underrated. Ministers have established a rapport which did not exist 20 years ago. They find it easy to talk to each other even where they disagree. This is not to be underestimated, but it is not political union either.

In economic and monetary matters, progress is more striking. The most important reason for such progress is the profound change which took place in France in the 1980s. Mitterrand's first government was the last French government to relish the destruction of the foundations of the economy in the interest of ideology. The crisis of 1981-82, and the political experience of *cohabitation* of the Right and the Left, have led to an unspoken consensus that inflationary government policies must not be allowed, and that certain elements of fiscal and budgetary policies must therefore be removed from the party game.

'No self-respecting business would regard Greece and Portugal as a market and exclude Austria and Sweden'

This conclusion applies above all to control of the quantity and the price of money. Britain is reluctant to debate constitutional issues, and if such debates emerge, they relate to traditional Charter 88 matters. In the rest of the world, the questions raised by 'constitutional economists' have become more important: what areas of decision making should be removed from political conflict and handed over to technical agencies? This, and not German domination, is the real problem of an 'independent' central bank. It also divides traditional defenders of parliamentary sovereignty from those who realise that without an extension of the constitutional realm into economic institutions, the basics of economic development will be forever at risk. The debate is not so much between Margaret Thatcher (and I suspect Neil Kinnock) and Leon Brittan, but between them and Samuel Brittan who is the most distinguished representative of constitutional economics in the British debate.

To come back to the main thread of the story, it is worth repeating that France has moved, in the 1980s, in a direction which makes it both attractive and easy for all political leaders to consider stabilising the constitutional basis of economic development even further by joining forces with Germany. This has made talk of economic and monetary

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union more than empty verbiage. Such talk is still far from clear. The noise created by Thatcher's intemperate remarks after the Rome summit has detracted attention from what was actually decided (indeed, unless the continental press is totally wrong, agreed by all heads of government including the British prime minister). Stage one of the process of EMU has begun; all members of the EC have embarked on it by joining the ERM and agreeing to certain procedures of co-operation. A second stage of intensified co-operation will not now start on January 1, 1993, as originally intended. Eleven members of the EC have agreed on January 1, 1994 as the starting date; Thatcher prefers to leave the date open. The shrewd and clear-headed Italian minister of finance and former governor of the Bank of Italy, Guido Carli, has commented plausibly that the date is almost irrelevant.

This is so because stage two is *not* monetary union. It is a stage in which something misleadingly called a central bank will be created, but the existing central banks continue to control whatever they control. It is a stage above all in which some of the economic and technical preconditions of monetary union in the sense of a common, eventually perhaps a single currency, are created. After three years, there will be a progress report. In the light of this progress report, thus in 1997 at the earliest, further decisions will be taken. And all this is dependent on the success of an Intergovernmental Conference which is to be set up this December.

This is all. So why the fuss? In part, it is true, one must take first steps seriously. There is no inevitability in public life, but it can be awkward to walk along with one's friends for miles on end and they suddenly declare that one never wanted to be in the party in the first place. Perhaps the more likely explanation of the fuss is that some were carried along to the very tentative decisions taken so far by the force of reason but against their deeper instincts. Voices of the past are powerful, as we can hear only too clearly in this year 1990, and they interfere with the requirements of the present. European progress will stir up emotions which is why it is important for those who support it to give their reasons.

Nor is this a mere exercise in catharsis. The reasons given for further progress along the, as yet, very uncertain route of EMU, are at the same time the conditions which have to be satisfied in order to make such progress acceptable. Germany and France have already stipulated conditions which virtually rule out an EMU of the present 12 members of the EC. Some of those who seem most jubilant today are very unlikely candidates for full monetary union. If Britain had added a point about democratic accountability this would have made sense. It would also have been a contribution to the debate rather than an expression of nostalgia, or of straight xenophobia.

Britain, in my view, has a deep and urgent interest in learning the lesson which France learnt in the 1980s. No future government should be permitted to play with inflation and thus with the basics of economic progress as the Conservative government has done in the last few years. There has to be a consensus about the quantity and the price of money (if not more), and this consensus must have institutional backing. This means an independent Bank of England, no less. Once this is achieved – if it is – Britain will not only be on a happier economic course but will also find it quite easy to discuss EMU in non-emotional terms. As it is, Britain is simply not a likely member of a European monetary union and therefore need not get worked up about it.

In this connection, the British or 'hard ecu' proposal has one important function even apart from its possible intrinsic merit. It has focused attention on stage two of the process of EMU. Chancellor Kohl has done the same by proposing a strictly irrelevant date, January 1, 1994. Advocates of rapid progress towards full monetary union never really wanted a stage two. For them, including President Delors, it was more a brief interlude than a phase of co-operation in its own right. Emphasising stage two therefore means delaying the moment of truth. It means gaining time for domestic changes and European negotiations, a great deal of time as it now appears. Far from getting worked up about very little, Britain should welcome this fact because it makes Britain's own participation much more likely.

I have dwelt at some length on monetary union not just because the subject is topical and in itself important. Full monetary union of the present 12 members of the European Community by the year 2000 is, to put it mildly, highly probable. But the subject will be with us, and so it should be. It forces Britain to think harder about the constitutional preconditions of successful economic policy, which is a good thing. The subject of EMU also epitomises both the chances and the limitations of the European construction.

Two points deserve emphasis. EMU is a matter of the head rather than the heart or the guts. One can try to play on some people's emotions by talking about the Queen's image on banknotes, but in fact the issues are practical and complicated. (If Britain were to demand that the Queen should be on all Ecu-notes, the others might even agree.) This is true for Europe in general. At least it is true for the Europe which is recommended in these remarks. Europe is not a substitute for the feelings associated with one's home town or even home country. It is not a supernation. Those in Britain who hope to regain, by way of Europe, what they think Britain has lost as a world power by itself, are as worrying as those who are happy to withdraw to the shores of this island. Europe is the space where certain interests can more effectively be pursued than in Britain, or in England, or in Oxford. Subsidiarity not only means that decisions should be removed to a wider space only where compelling reasons can be given, but it also establishes a scale of decreasing emotions. The further away matters are decided the less do they engage our hearts. Ecus are no more suitable as subjects of strong feeling than travellers' cheques or credit cards.

'EMU is a matter of the head rather than the heart or the guts'

The other point is equally important. No one in his or her senses can believe that, by creating a common or even a single currency in part of Europe, we would solve the world problems of stable preconditions for trade and other transactions. Europe is not an island. For one thing, the European Community is quite incomplete even in Europe. The issue of membership will not go away. Any move towards EMU will of necessity affect, indeed include, the Austrian schilling and the Swedish crown and others. For another, the world outside is very much present. As one looks back to the first attempt to create EMU before Britain entered the EC in the early 1970s, the most striking lesson is that Europe cannot impose its own calender on a recalcitrant world. Things may happen which nobody has thought of, and they may upset the best-laid plans. Thus whatever is done by way of European co-operation and integration will have to be a part of much wider networks of interdependence. An Ecu which is more than a basket of currencies would be but one building block of an international monetary system which takes up the thread left broken when Bretton Woods collapsed in the 1970s. More generally, Europe is a constructive force (one hopes) in a new world order, but not a substitute for such an order.

Not everyone likes the vision of Europe implied by these remarks. Some want to go much further and dream of a federal Europe which holds its own in some imaginary superpower game, others are afraid of even admitting interests which Britain may share with its European neighbours. This is a debate which the two traditional parties will have to conduct and eventually settle. For the country, the issue is different. It is practical and yet crucial. One way of putting it is to ask politicians at home: what is the case for Britain pursuing policies which deny the country the advantages which others in Europe have found, when for example, they removed the control over quantity and price of money from party politics? The other way of putting the question is no less important: how can Britain best pursue those of its interests which it shares with the other countries of Europe? The answer must surely be a more European Britain.●

Ralf Dahrendorf is the author of Reflections On The Revolution In Europe

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Future Of Europe

Unfinished Business

The purpose of the forthcoming Intergovernmental Conferences is to reform the European Community. **Helen Wallace** argues that their brief is far too narrow and restricted. The new Europe requires a bolder sense of vision.

The members of the European Community (EC) are engaged in a vigorous debate about the ways of intensifying economic and political integration in western Europe. Two Intergovernmental Conferences – Community code for a constitutional conclave – have been summoned for mid-December to decide what changes to make to the EC treaties. The prevailing assumption, at least on the continent, is that the EC is already a successful enterprise in transnational collaboration, but that it has unfinished business, the creation of an economic and monetary union, and needs more effective political institutions.

Yet in some ways the preoccupation with how the EC runs its own affairs seems curiously detached from the wider European picture and the dramas of the last 18 months. The EC has made an important contribution to supporting the reform process to the east and plans to do more. There is, however, a disturbing lack of vision about the longer term refashioning of European institutions. This is most evident in the reluctance to admit that perhaps the EC itself may have to change radically in order to accommodate a much larger and more diverse membership.

The Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs) of the new Europe have been set the task of responding to the challenge. Or have they? On the contrary, their agendas were set out long before the Berlin Wall was ruptured and only their timing has been accelerated in response to German unification. Enlargement does not figure as an item for discussion; the primary aim seems rather to be to continue to pursue the old goals of west European integration. There is a real risk that the outcome will be too modest and introverted to fashion a new European constitution.

The EC consists of only 12 European countries, about a third (depending on your arithmetic and your definitions) of European countries. The Treaty of Rome reads (Article 237) that: 'any European state may apply to be a member... '.The EC faces applications from three groups of other Europeans. Of the poor Mediterraneans, Turkey, Cyprus and Malta have already applied. The relatively prosperous west Europeans from EFTA are determined not to lose out on the single market. Austria has already applied. The Swedish government has stated its aim of eventual membership. The leaderships of the two largest Norwegian parties share this aspiration. Of Finns, 22% believe they are already inside the EC, though their government may take a little longer to commit itself, and the Icelanders likewise. It is improbable in the extreme that the Swiss will sit idly by while all their Efta colleagues chase after EC membership. And then there are the east Europeans. The Czechs and Hungarians have already stated their goal of membership and others can be expected to follow suit.

Where does this leave the EC? The

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short answer is, in a pickle. The formal response to all applications has been 'not yet', or at least 'not until after 1992'. These standard phrases go back three years and well precede the upheavals of the reforms in eastern Europe. 1992, in the sense of the completion of the single market, was a convenient excuse, especially for the manifestly less economically advanced Turks. It is an excuse that would look pretty unconvincing in the event of most, if not all, Efta counties applying for membership. After all, the Swiss are in some senses geographically and economically more intergrated with the EC than several outlying EC members. It may be prudent to defer the question of central and east European countries becoming 'acceptable' candidates until we are a little surer of their capacity to deliver sustained economic and political reforms. Yet it seems politically implausible for the EC to turn its back on these new democracies any more than it could turn its back on the Greeks, the Spanish and the Portuguese, as they escaped from dictatorship.

So the EC is not Europe, though increasingly those other Europeans wish that it were. Or, to put it another way, the apparent benefits of EC membership seem sufficiently seductive for other European states to be talking about when, not whether, they too should share those benefits. And there are not even rough counterparts of the EC to provide credible alternatives or to act as partners able to bargain effectively with the EC. Efta almost did it by emerging from dormancy to articulate the aspirations of its members for a form of not quite membership. But the EC – Efta negotiations over the proposed European Economic Area (EEA, and jargon for a west Europe-wide single market) have become impaled on the problem of finding institutional arrangements for a mutually acceptable halfway house, hence the rush by the Eftans to go the whole hog.

An important lesson should be drawn from this serious attempt by the EC to forge a new relationship with the Eftans. It is very difficult to devise a formula for something short of full membership by separating economics (the common market) from politics (full involvement in the institutions and political commitments of the EC). It is difficult even when the negotiation is with advanced, industrialised welfare states with market economies. How much more difficult it will be to devise an adequate framework for a new relationship with the so much less advanced central and east Europeans. The planned 'super-association'agreements with, in the first instance, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary may be a useful staging post, but they are limited in scope and not generous in substance.

The apparent answer to this dilemma might be to argue for rapid enlargement of the EC, on the grounds that history has overtaken the narrower grouping of the 12. Thatcher has argued this fairly explicitly and the notion certainly holds a sentimental appeal to the Labour Party. A wider and weaker Community, frozen at the current level of integration, would work with the grain of the new Europe, it might be said, and very conveniently get doubters in Britain off the hook as regards a stronger and politically more constraining EC. But is this really a satisfactory answer? To freeze integration might in practice be to weaken the Community. The would-be new members of the EC show little sign of wanting to be part of a looser or less robust EC. On the contrary,their purpose is to be part of a vigorous Community and indeed to jump quickly on to a train which they precisely hope is continuing on its journey. In any case the EC will not be much use to the central and east Europeans, if it is not able to deliver sustained economic growth, financial transfers and political reinforcement. Nor is the EC much use to the Swedes if it cannot staunch the haemorrhaging of an ailing economy.

The better answer seems to be to accept that enlargement will not satisfy new members unless the EC can also devise means of ensuring that it retains its robustness and its sense of purpose. Most EC members accept the second proposition, but have yet to face up to the implications of the first. Indeed the two IGCs have been convened precisely, so they say, to provide robustness in the form of economic and monetary union and to reassert the purpose of political union. But these aims have hardly been modified to take account of the changes elsewhere in Europe except insofar as they might serve to keep the enlarged Federal Republic of Germany firmly tied into the EC.

What then are the two IGCs likely to achieve? It would be a fool's game to try at this stage to predict where these negotiations will end up by summer or autumn 1991, but it is possible to make some plausible guesses. The IGC on EMU could well approve treaty texts that state the aim of full EMU and define a timetable for achieving it, with some precision on the statute of a form of more or less independent central bank, some detail on the next phase of policy convergence, and arrangements for later adherence for those countries not yet ready to move at the pace of the most committed. Such texts would be ambitious but would not tell the whole tale, since the proof of the pudding would remain to be tasted and tested over several more years. Quite apart from its potential economic import, such a step would raise the political threshold of integration at least in form. It would not, however, mean that the political debate was over on core economic issues or on what would be subject to collective decision.

What of the political IGC? Here the opposite outcome is more likely, namely modest texts that would, at the margins, strenthen the institutions of the EC, but without changing the existing balance between different EC institutions or between the EC and national levels of governance. In practice this would mean that ministers in the Council would take more decisions by majority vote on a wider range of subjects, perhaps environmental, some social issues and so on in the 'softer' areas of policy. This would dispose of rogue vetos that delay and dilute EC legislation. But individual member states would not be systematically subordinated to the will of the majority. Nor would it become easier necessarily to reach 'sensible' decisions on the common agricultural policy, where majority voting has been an established but often ignored decision rule for many years.

In parallel the European Parliament is likely to acquire some increased powers. It would have more scope for amending proposed new EC laws and for calling the Commission to account for its actions. In particular financial accountability may be made more rigorous through controls over EC expenditure. But this would not transform the European Parliament into a fully-fledged democratic parliament.

The Commission will probably also gain a little more authority. It may acquire more scope to carry out agreed Community policies and to keep EC governments up to the mark in doing what they said they would do to implement EC legislation. It could well also have a more political profile, if the appointment of the Commissioners themselves had to be endorsed by members of the Parliament and not just agreed by the Council. This would make a symbolic difference, but it would not turn the Commission into a 'government' and certainly not into the government of the Community. Powers would still be dispersed, a fact likely to be reinforced by the addition of language in the treaties about subsidiarity, namely a political safeguard to ensure that the balance between EC, national and regional levels of governance is not disturbed, except in those cases where there are strong enough and widely agreed reasons to support the case for allocating policy powers to the EC level.

The most unpredictable element is the debate about extending the foreign and security policy powers of the EC and its associated arm of European Political Co-operation, the framework already established for concerting foreign policy among the 12 EC members. It is here that the impact of the changed geo-political context is concentrated. The Soviet threat has abated, but the USSR remains dangerously armed, albeit at lower levels. The US remains in Nato, but less interested in retaining large numbers of troops in Europe. Enough of the sparkle has gone out of Nato to worry some Europeans that they need to safeguard west European security in a more European framework. The Italians have argued that this should be through the EC. The Gulf crisis has

'So the EC is not Europe, though increasingly those other Europeans wish that it were'

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also focused west European attention on the need to be alert to threats 'out-of-area', leading the Italians again to run the argument for the EC moving to centre stage, leaving the Western European Union (WEU) in the wings.

These ambitions are unlikely to be matched by precise texts. Few of the EC governments, notably the French and British, are willing at this stage to contemplate so radical a step. Nor is there anything like an emerging consensus either that Nato has run its course or that WEU should now be allowed to go to sleep again. It is too early to judge what life can be breathed into the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe as a broad security framework for the whole of Europe and what that might imply for the EC. It seems more probable that the consensus will be to keep open, rather than to foreclose options. Also it is in this one chapter of the institutional debate that EC members recognise that potential new EC members, neutral west Europeans and new east European democracies, might have some difficulty associating themselves more closely with an EC that had a strengthened security personality.

Thus the political IGC, at least on the current balance of probabilities, looks likely to produce more of the same in a rather undisturbing way. In other words the EC does not seem to be about to burst into a fully federal form, nor does Brussels seem likely to be all that much more constraining than it has been before. Political power and authority will continue to be shared with strong member states, the governments of which will each have their manifold opportunities to express their views and defend their interests with persistent vigour. It is not only the British who are keen to do this, but it is only the British who doubt their continued ability to influence the EC debate and therefore insist on a snail's pace for reforms.

So constitutional tinkering looks more likely than constitutional overhaul, an apparently comfortable scenario from the perspective of many British people. But is it really so comfortable? 'Steady as you go' may be a virtuous prescription for a stable grouping with an established policy agenda, yet all the evidence suggests that it is not a stable grouping or cannot long remain so. Modest reform of the institutions now could make the EC of the 12 a more effective organisation, but would hardly equip a Community of 18 (ie, including Efta) or of twenty odd members, with eastern and southern enlargement as well.

'The logic of enlargement argues for a much more radical overhaul of the European constitution'

The logic of enlargement thus argues for a much more radical overhaul of the European constitution. The problem is that there is no blueprint for this. At least three key questions need to be tackled. First, how could effective decisions be taken collectively in a much enlarged Community with members ranging in size and importance from, say, Malta to Germany? The answer has to be found in a new look at the roles and powers of the Council, Commission and European Parliament so as to find a new blend of collective authority and democratic checks and balances. Secondly, how much is it reasonable to expect the Community to be able to do? Simply to add both members and policy powers would be to overload all the circuits. It is more important to recognise the limits of integration than to heap on to the Community all the policy problems that beset its members. Thirdly, however, what policy instruments would an enlarged Community need,to be able to provide sustained support for the economies and political aspirations of a much more diverse membership? The answers will have to be found across a wide spectrum of policies, at one end an expanded collective budget for real resource transfers, and at the other end sufficient political cohesion to counteract political instabilities from within and political challenges from outside.

The participants in the IGCs may not yet have focused on these questions. They may believe that time is on their side for piecemeal adjustment. They may prefer to rest on their laurels and concentrate on their own internal priorities. In so doing they would not be serving the new Europe well.●

Helen Wallace directs the West European Programme at the Royal Institute of International Affairs.

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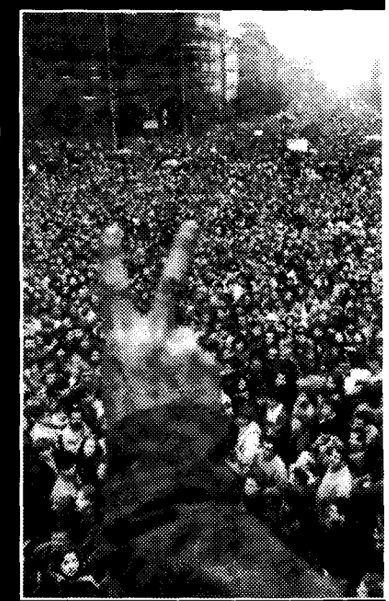

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Future Of Europe

Europe's Third World

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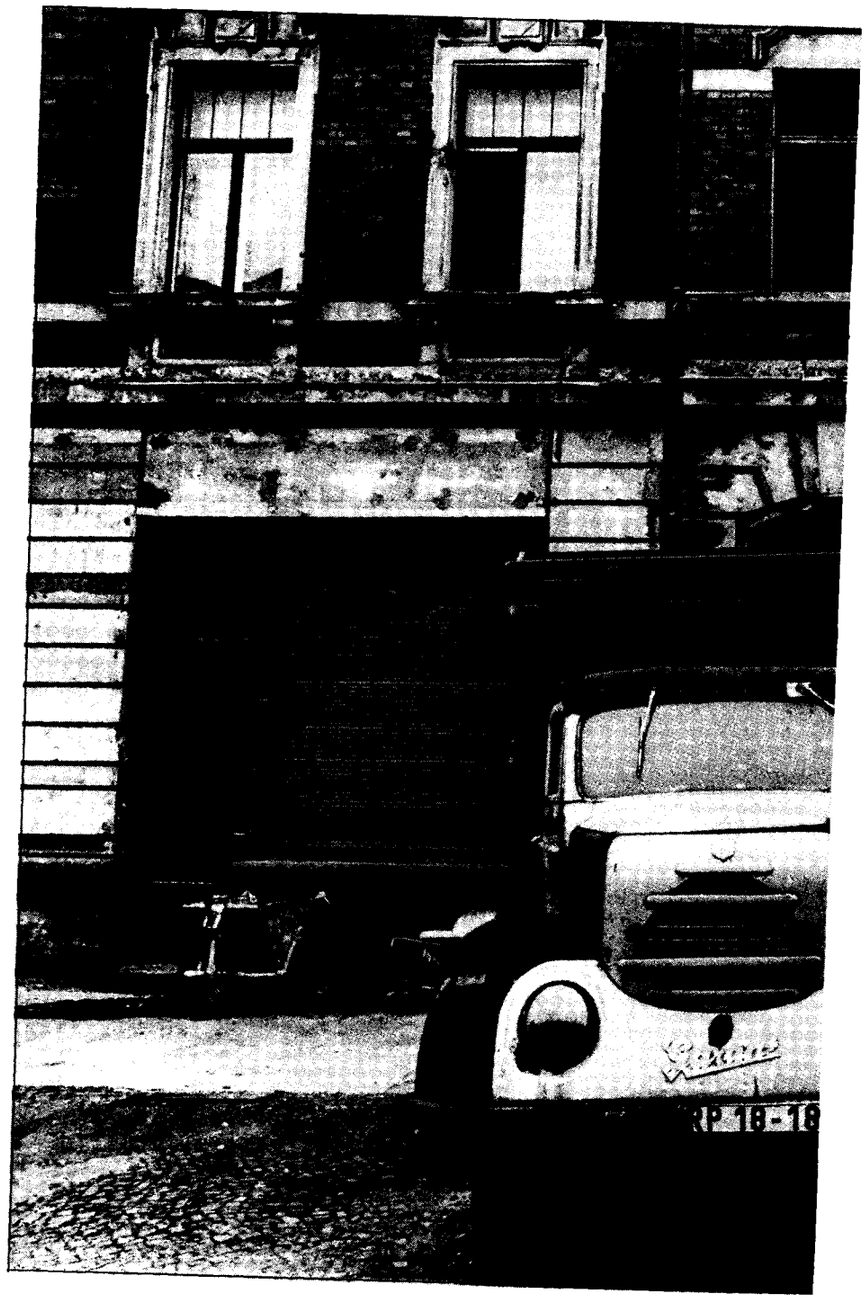

In 19th-century Europe, there developed a paradigm for changing a regime – for a full blown *Staatskrise* as opposed to a mere *Regierungskrise* or change of government. This model, almost never followed in all its etiquette, came mostly from French practice. First you had to have some sort of revolution (a mob of students and poets carrying flags would do) which occupied the seat of power. The mob then issued a declaration of a new republic, and formed a provisional revolutionary government. Next came elections, to form a constituent assembly which would draw up a new constitution. The constitution would then be put to the people by referendum. After that came the last stage: the first elections to the new parliament under the new constitution. The long ceremony of bourgeois revolution was complete.

How far has the European revolution of 1989 proceeded down this track? It seems to me that, broadly speaking, it has arrived at stage three: the old regimes have been overthrown, the first elections have mostly been held, and the new authorities are 'constituting'. Sometimes they are literally drafting the new constitution. More often, they are also generally planning the nature and the ground rules of the political society which is to follow.

There have been general elections, following the revolutions in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria and, of course, in what used to be the German Democratic Republic. Poland is the exception, with a parliament whose composition still derives from the 1989 roundtable compromise: the presidential elections of November 25 would seem to confuse the situation still further rather than to clarify it. The

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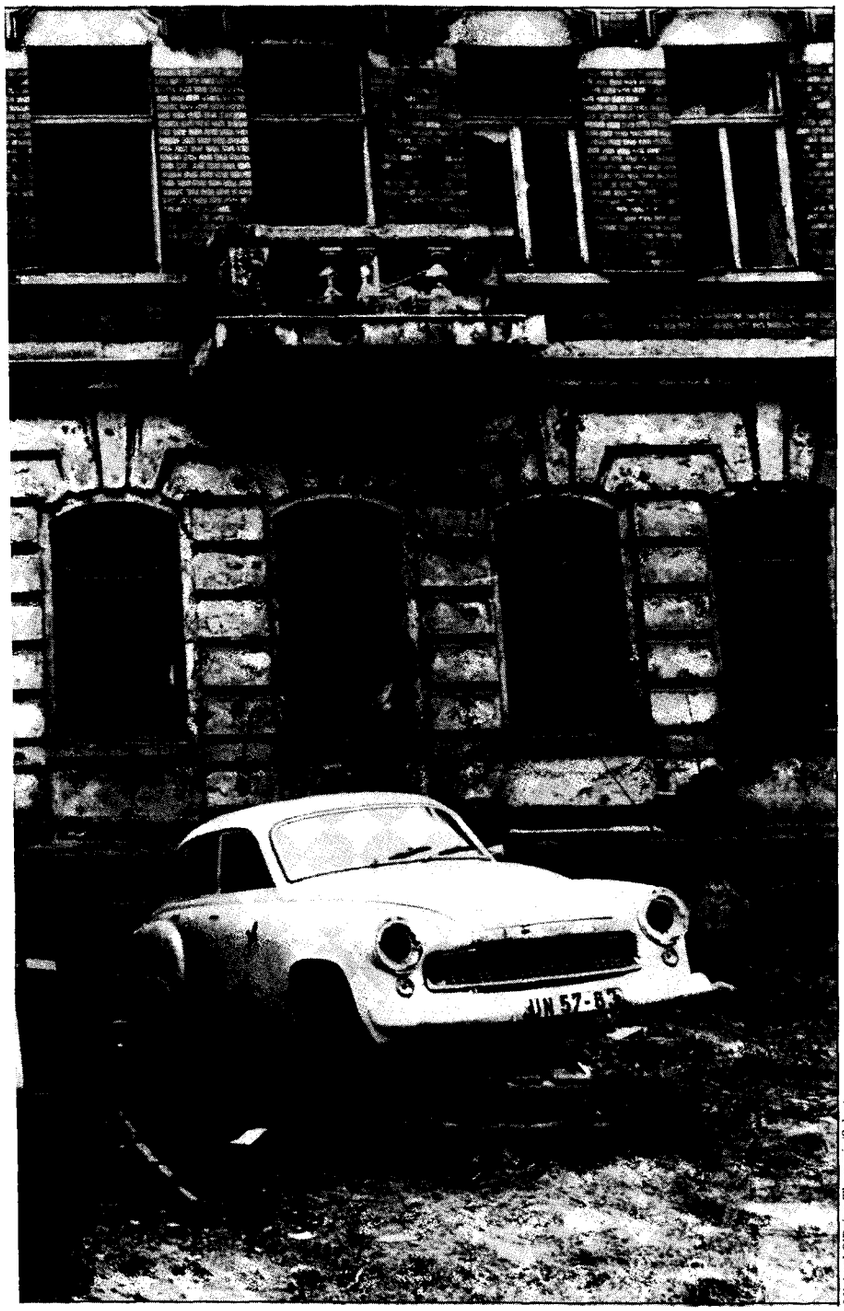

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only way of fitting Poland into the paradigm is to see the Mazowiecki government as a form of provisional revolutionary government, installed by the parliamentary coup which Lech Walesa engineered last autumn. However, the election of Walesa as president, equipped with the sweeping emergency powers held by General Jaruzelski, threatens to pre-empt the whole 'constituting' phase: the power-game begins before its new rules have been established.

Yugoslavia is another difficult case to classify in this way. In Slovenia and Croatia, the old regimes have been deposed and non-Communist governments installed. In Serbia 'free' elections are due on December 9, but the socialist (ex-communist) party led by Milosevic, whose popularity is sinking, is using every weapon of state power to avert defeat. Just possibly, the extreme nationalists under Vuk Draskovic and others could combine and win. It's arguable that while the Slovenes and Croats are beginning to create their own political societies, the Serbs have not yet passed the threshold of revolutionary upset.

Where the revolutionaries have submitted themselves to election, the results have been diverse. In Czechoslovakia, they won heavily in June 1990: the government is essentially a Civic Forum government. In Poland, where there has been no general election since the semi-free poll of June 1989, those who carried the main burden of opposition to the last Communist governments are also in power: a Solidarity government. Hungary, in April, went differently. Most of the relatively small opposition to Communism made its home in the Free Democrat or Young Democrat parties, but the election results allowed the Democratic Forum to form a government.

In the GDR, the first and last free elections ever to be held there, in March 1990, swept away the New Forum and the other small groups which had inspired the revolutionary mass movements in the late autumn of 1989, principally in favour of the Christian Democrats and the hope of speedy unification with West Germany. In Bulgaria, the Socialist (lately the Communist) Party won a surprising and heavy victory in June, beating the main opposition group by 211 seats to 144. Romania went to the polls in May, in terrible confusion and panic: the National Salvation Front won about 60% of the votes for parliament, while Ion Iliescu, its leader, took 85% of the votes for president. Both the front and the younger opposition parties could claim shares in the credit for bringing down Ceausescu, but their mutual hatred remains so great that no consensus has emerged on which a new democratic regime can safely be constructed.

'Poland shows the sort of price which is being paid. Half the population is now living below the poverty line'

At first, it looked as if these revolutions would fairly rapidly devour their children, in the sense that the political forces which led them would be displaced by more traditional and nationalist movements. But the latest signals are not all in that direction. Right-wing parties have not made much headway so far in the Czech lands, although in Slovakia the Slovak Nationalist Party (SNS) is rapidly building up strength against the government in Bratislava and may score heavily in the municipal election on November 23-24. Opposition to Lech Walesa's authoritarian style is getting its act together in Poland and his victory in the presidential elections on November 25 no longer seems inevitable.

In Hungary the ruling Democratic forum took an unexpected battering, on a low poll, at the local election in mid-October, and the Free Democrats and the Young Democrats surged back to take some 40% of the vote (modern Hungarian history has never seen such a performance by radical-liberal parties which are mostly city-based and which have been smeared by their opponents as Jewish-led). The Land elections in eastern Germany, however, showed no signs of regret for the huge CDU vote in March, and Chancellor Kohl is expected to triumph there again in the first all-German elections on December 3.

All these 'bourgeois revolutions' and even the Bulgarian rulers who mime them, are committed to plural parliamentary democracy and to economic reform in the direction of the free market. Here again, there are differences of pace. Poland launched itself recklessly over Niagara in January, with a programme of rapid and radical introduction of market forces. Hungary has moved more slowly, after a decade of cautious liberalisation under the Kadar regime. Czechoslovakia has scarcely begun the process, and the first

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steep price rises and big privatisations will take place early next year. In the Soviet Union, Estonia is the only republic where political declarations of sovereignty have been accompanied by any real and palpable economic changes. Lithuania, for example, is still living economically in the Brezhnev period.

But all, eventually, must shoot the rapids. The stages of marketisation seem to include an initial outbreak of high, perhaps hyper-inflation. When that has been mastered by letting the currency float (or rather plunge) to find its 'true' value against the dollar or mark, there follows a period of steeply falling living standards as subsidies are removed and prices decontrolled. The population, accustomed to carrying wads of useless money around shops with empty shelves or long queues, now learns the reverse experience: well-stocked shops, but incomes too low to afford the goods. Poverty is compounded as factories close under the pressure of competition or Western asset-stripping, and unemployment swells. But then, the hope goes, somewhere at the bottom of this trough of misery the take-up begins, as native and foreign entrepreneurs begin to buy up privatised industries or invest in new ones. From then on, there should begin a slow recovery towards a modest version of Western capitalist prosperity.

Poland shows the sort of price which is being paid. Half the population is now living below the poverty line, state-supported soup kitchens are everywhere, unemployment will pass a million and a half in December, standards of public health are falling, and so far only 8.5% of industrial production is in private hands. The small but growing group of Poles who have become rich in these circumstances are sourly perceived as parasites rather than brave entrepreneurs. In Hungary, the standard of living has fallen by some 20% for each of the last three years: inflation is running at between 30% and 50%, and destitute poverty, compounded by homelessness, is becoming common in the cities. That was the background to the drivers' blockade and strike at the end of October, after the government had almost doubled petrol prices overnight. The government had its reasons: the Soviet Union stopped fuel deliveries in August (it will require payment in convertible currency at world prices from 1991), and there were only four days' petrol stocks left. But the blockade is an omen: the first real mutiny against the cost of economic transformation in eastern Europe.

German unification has been no blessing. The market for industrial goods in what was East Germany is closing, as enterprises switch orders to West Germany. Meanwhile, West German importers who once bought industrial goods in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary are finding cheaper suppliers in their own eastern territories. But the most serious impact comes from the Soviet Union. World prices in hard currency are demanded now for Soviet petroleum, as oil prices rise giddily, while the Gulf conflict makes imports from other sources impossibly expensive. In a way, the disaster of the 1970s is being repeated, when the 1974 oil price rise wrecked several attempts at economic liberalisation in eastern Europe and began to pile up the mountainous foreign debts – Polish and Hungarian, especially – which are still growing.

The political process, in a sense, becomes a race against time. It is a race to establish stable and accepted democratic systems before the social discontent generated by economic change finds political expression. If organised protest, by parties or in the streets, explodes before stage three is completed, then the whole move towards 'bourgeois republican democracy' may halt. Lech Walesa's challenge to the Mazowiecki government in Poland is a threat of this kind. If his jump into the ring could have been postponed until next year, when free general elections would have been held and followed by a constitution reducing presidential power to – say – a German level, rather than the almost unlimited power to rule by decree which Walesa intends to inherit from Jaruzelski, Polish democracy would look safer. However, it is still not clear what kind of political movements will pick up the constituency of those who are the losers by economic reform.

A few months ago, it looked likely that – with all forms of socialist option hopelessly unpopular – the losers' vote would go to varieties of xenophobic right-wing nationalism. There are strong elements of this in Lech Walesa's current rhetoric, while anti-semitism is back in the political vocabulary all over eastern and central Europe. So far, though, there has been no real breakthrough of right-wing populism into the dispossessed mass of the industrial working classes. It may yet happen, but it has not happened yet.

How will the new republics fit into 'existing Europe'? The European Community appears to be deciding – against Margaret Thatcher's protests – that full political and economic union is also in the best interests of eastern Europe. This is probably right, if the alternatives are to be dominated by German economic strength or by a super-state of which Germany is only a component. Meanwhile, a variety of competing schemes for association circulate within the region. Hungary and Czechoslovakia, encouraged by Italy, are already being singled out as the front runners for closer links with the EC. Meanwhile an invisible ditch is being dug around Poland, all of whose neighbours – including Austria and Czechoslovakia – now impose visa requirements on Poles while they are being abolished, for instance, between Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Britain. This is a response to Poland's poverty, to the pressure of Polish westward emigration, and to the emergence of an enormous Polish mafia running most of the flea-markets and smuggling rackets throughout north-eastern Europe. The Oder river, the Polish-German frontier, is already talked of as another Rio Grande: the border between Europe's First and Third Worlds. Striving to escape from this isolation, Polish diplomacy has been toying with visions of a Baltic alliance or trade block comprising Scandinavia, Poland and the Baltic republics.

'The political process becomes a race against time, a race to establish stable democratic systems before the social discontent generated by economic change finds political expression'

Security arrangements for eastern Europe, or rather for Europe as a whole, are a matter of looming shadows rather than of definite plans and choices. The dangers to peace, internal and international, are many: most of them involve the reanimation of violent ethnic resentments which were preserved, frozen but unsolved, through the Communist period. New poverty and the collapse of old certainties mean that symbolic politics still have their appeal to the powerless, and to their demagogues. The most explosive of these problems are, in my view, the Macedonian question, the disputes between Greece and Turkey (including Cyprus), the Transylvanian question, and the relationship of Poland to her eastern neighbours if Russian control of the Ukraine and Byelorussia breaks down. These are quarrels, actual or potential, which could bring nation-states into conflict with one another. 'Internal' problems – Kosovo and the other Yugoslav disputes, the future of Slovakia and so on – will have to be controlled and solved.

As the Warsaw Pact dissolves, Nato seems resolved to survive. With the end of the cold war, neutrality has lost much of its attraction: most, if not all the new republics would probably apply to join Nato if that were a practical proposition. At present, though, it is not; partly because Nato does not want them and – more importantly – because it would give the impression that eastern Europe was joining a defensive military alliance against the Soviet Union. For the moment, the alternative will be to build up peacekeeping and conflict-mediating institutions for CSCE, the 35-nation Conference on European Security and Co-operation.

In the end, the political paradigm for development ceases to be helpful. The best constitutions, the most promising evolution of party politics, cannot guarantee that parts of eastern Europe will not slide back into a condition of de-industrialised, semi-colonial dependence on the West. The gap between economic and political cultures, East and West, is far wider than superficial reforms of institutions suggest. No Western population would tolerate the suffering and disruption involved in most of these transitions to a market economy, and until they are completed, no new democratic structures will be safe.●

Neal Ascherson is a columnist on The Independent On Sunday and a writer on East European affairs.

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March Without Vision

Thatcherism is on its last legs. **Stuart Hall** and **Martin Jacques** examine how Labour is shaping up

Sometime last year it became evident that Thatcherism had lost the remarkable command over British politics it had exercised for a decade. In October 1989 the cover of this magazine bore the words: 'the end of Thatcherism'. It was not clear at that point that Mrs Thatcher would lose the next election, but it was evident that the era in which the Thatcherite project occupied the leading position across a whole spectrum of strategic issues was drawing to a close. The important point about Thatcherism has never been simply its capacity to win elections, impressive as that has been. The distinctive quality has been its ability to be, or at least its clear mission to become, hegemonic: to be the leading force in British social and political life, to set a new political agenda and fundamentally re-shape the political terrain. This distinction between a hegemonic political project and the capacity to win elections or be ahead in the opinion polls is the critical one in both the definition of, and the response to, Thatcherism.

All the signs now suggest that it is Thatcherism's hegemonic position in society which is melting away. Its chances of winning the next election are also beginning to look remote. There is of course no certainty about this. Thatcher herself is one of the most astute and powerful of contemporary political leaders and her drive for more power has been remorseless – not least because it is not personally but ideologically driven: she means to use whatever powers she can command for a Higher Purpose. In addition there is still a year to go before the election timetable begins to run against her, and there are give-away budgets, swings in inflation and the odd Gulf War to go before she must face the electorate. Another advantage she has is that she is surrounded in her cabinet by men hungry for office but scared and wimpish in the extreme; and she is unlikely to leave without being challenged. Above all, Labour's long and impressive lead in the opinion polls (electorally) is really exceedingly soft in political (that is hegemonic) terms. Nevertheless, there is now a strong basis on which to conclude that we are entering the beginning of the end of Thatcherism.

The crisis of Thatcherism has less to do with the advances made by Labour, and more to do with Thatcherism's own contradictions. It has always been a contradictory phenomenon. And now, in the third term the capacity to square circles is running out. In the early phase of the project, turning round the economy was the centrepiece of the strategy. But Thatcher always made clear that this was secondary to – the means to the end of – reconstructing society itself, and creating a new moral order. These may sound like high-falutin' terms, but Thatcherism was deadly serious about this. The Left's failure to take the Thatcherite social revolution seriously indicates the short-term character of its own perspectives, and the long-term nature of hers. In fact, neither objective has been achieved. The economic miracle – market forces in command – has proved to be a mirage. And the social revolution is running into the sands.

The third term was dedicated to the social revolution – which had previously eluded the Thatcherites but which was always the essence of their bid for hegemony. The strategy was to harness the economy and shift the balance of political forces in order to 'reform' society in a new, historic direction. This bold but dangerous project has largely failed. It entailed breaking up the unholy alliances between 'old' and 'new' Conservatives, challenging some of the darkest but most venerable recesses of the British class system, confronting ingrained social habits and dismantling institutions which had become enshrined in the hearts and minds of the electorate. The legislative programme has been vigorously pursued – right-wing think tanks cheer-leading from the sidelines. But it has failed to win anything like majority support.

The NHS proposals have wrought havoc with the health service, and the full horrors of the hybrid monster of private and public imperatives which the Clarke reforms have created are still to be experienced. But Thatcherism has failed in its wider aim – to dislodge the majority of people from a commitment to a publicly-funded health care system for all. The poll tax enshrined the impeccable simplicities of Thatcherism – crushing local government, allowing market forces to rip through local services, separating the (Tory) strong and wealthy from the (Labour) weak and deprived, and putting Labour councils in the front line to perform the dirty work that capping made necessary. But its cynical, indefensible inequality scandalised, rather than converted, everybody. Despite the deceitful propagation of the 'gospel of active citizenship' – putting the thin band-aid of philanthropy around the open wounds of the welfare state – people have begun to talk about the new caring mood of the 90s: not at all what Thatcher had in mind.

Europe is the question which has smoked the contradictions in the philosophy of Thatcherism into the open. Since the whole project has been hinged, ideologically, around the narrowest, most racist, exclusive and backward-looking definition of English national identity, and focused on the ancient symbols of empire and nation, hearth and family, kin and culture, the idea that Thatcherism could lead the nation to embrace a European identity and future always lacked conviction. But characteristically – another contradiction – it clung to the illusion that Britain could snatch the economic goodies for itself from the European shop window,

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Illustration: Paul Bateman

without having to pay any social, political or cultural dues. Thatcher has gone about as far as she can in attempting to ride these two horses at once. Now that their paths have decisively diverged, she is left trying to clutch the reins of both at the same time. Tricky business. All the fudging in the world will not put such ancient icons of 'Englishness' as Tebbit and Ridley in touch with the broader contours of European culture.

But there is a further factor which helps to explain the Thatcherite crisis. From the outset, this was a radical experiment. It had its chosen social agents – the exemplars of its project, its 'heroes' – the self-made entrepreneur, the post-Big Bang City dealer and the aspirant working class, all united by the spirit of enterprise. It was driven by a strategic perspective rather than short-term tactics. Its motto was permanent revolution. In many ways this was something profoundly un-English. Thatcherism's closest parallels as a political project, in this respect at least, are on the left, not the right. This sense of radicalism gave it tremendous impetus and energy: new ideas – each more breathtakingly reactionary – tumbled on to the political stage. And it put Thatcherism in touch with some of the most dynamic forces of its time. But slowly, Thatcherism has been losing its rapport with society, as is the wont of so many radical political projects, and as the Left knows to its cost so well. The British body politic is beginning to reject the Thatcherite transplant. And as the impetus has faded, the fragmentation has set in.

'The crisis of Thatcherism has less to do with the advances made by Labour, and more to do with Thatcherism's own contradictions'

One possible outcome is a rally in Thatcherism's fortunes followed by a fourth term: but it is now the least likely outcome. Another is the possibility that the Tories will ditch Thatcher and succeed in salvaging victory from the ashes of her departure. But by far the most likely outcome of this extraordinary process of collapse is a Labour victory at the next election. But what, in the aftermath of Thatcherism, would that mean?

Labour's renaissance has much more to do with Thatcherism's crisis than anything it might have done itself. Nevertheless, Labour has contributed something to its recovery. Over the past seven years, and especially since its third defeat at the 1987 election, it has taken itself in hand, at the electoral level. It has mastered the art of public relations and political self-presentation in a manner which puts the Tories in the shade. Its leaders have modernised themselves. They look and speak a language which is readily understood by the electors. The shadow frontbench look more convincing – like well-dressed Euro-social democrats, effective, though not yet commanding, political technocrats.

Labour's annual conference is now more effectively disciplined and stage-managed than the Tory conference, which – with its flag-waving, sea-of-blue, last-night-of-the-proms effects – is beginning to look distinctly anachronistic. The grand old socialist rhetoric, which always had its moments from the floor before the hard-headed compromise resolutions rolled everybody back into place, has virtually disappeared from the conference itself. Once the latter was driven by a sense of class consciousness: now it is driven by television consciousness. In so far as winning elections in a system of party competition is the name of the game, Labour now plays it with a great deal more sophistication than it ever did before.

The most important change, however, concerns the shift in policy. The old Labour landmarks – nationalisation, unilateralism, opposition to the EC – have been buried. This may not mean quite as much as it seems, for Labour's actual policies were always less oriented in practice by these goals than its rhetoric suggested. They were more part of the Labour ritual than of its concrete political strategy. But their symbolic loss is not to be underestimated. The key question is, what does this shift in policy commitments mean? Is it the result of a profound intellectual revolution – the kind of deep unhinging of strategy, of a whole universe of thought, such as Thatcherism dragged old-style Conservatism screaming and kicking through in the early 1980s? Is it the result of a new analysis of society, a new philosophy, an emerging strategy for the new times? Or is it a skillful adaptation to unfavourable terrain – its parameters determined by a reactive response to the success of the other side in defining the historical agenda?

If Labour has 're-made' itself by passing through an intellectual revolution, then there is something distinctly eerie about the process. Intellectual revolutions are normally characterised by enormous energy, as old ideas and ways

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of thinking are replaced by new insights and parameters. In the normal course of events, ideas change slowly. Intellectual revolutions are different: modes of thinking are transformed overnight, accompanied by enormous excitement, a ferment of ideas. All this is absent from the Labour Party. Here we have an intellectual revolution without any accompanying intellectual energy.

Indeed, the opposite is the case. New ideas have been carefully and scrupulously avoided. New thinking is strictly regimented. Strategic inquiry is actively discouraged. Thatcherism generated a whole corpus of intellectuals scurrying over one another to position themselves to influence the historic course of events. The intellectual eddies around Labour's self-refashioning hardly ruffle the surface. Each shadow minister has his or her small band of backroom advisers. But that is a quite different matter from creating an intellectual movement, setting a political current in motion, in the wider society. Of the latter, there is little evidence. The new party may be a well-disciplined machine: but it has disciplined the hard questions, the debate about alternative scenarios, the strategic analyses, right out of existence.

One reason why Labour's intellectual revolution lacks intellectual energy is that it has been taken off the historical shelf. It has not been made, it has been inherited. Its inspiration is the revisionism of the Crosland-Gaitskell era. This intellectual wave, in the 1950s, represented the bid for power of the Labour Right – and later of what became the SDP. Whatever its political inclinations, it did offer, at the time, a genuine alternative project. It had to be taken seriously. There was a political and intellectual spine to it. It contained an analysis of capitalism, the erosion of class and the capacity of the corporate state to provide the foundations of a new strategy for organised capitalism which – though, it turned out to be wrong – emerged from an effort to understand the new dynamic of postwar capitalism. Its political strategy followed from the logic of the analysis. It identified the social actors – the 'historical bloc' – who were to be the bearers of this political strategy (the white-hot technological working class).

The key problem with the Crosland revolution, in this context, is that it was conceived as a response to the 1950s. It belongs to the past. The intellectual inspiration behind Labour's revolution lies in history not the present. It does not represent an engagement with contemporary society. Thatcherism, too, belongs in many ways to the past and it has its own historical reference points, icons and texts. But it has something else – it is a response to its own times. As a consequence, its radical right programme was rooted in the society in which it lived. Again, the Left has found it difficult to make the clear distinction between agreeing with Thatcherism and understanding the way in which its strategies were addressed to real issues, which Labour – if it were serious about alternatives – would have to address as well.

To clinch the point, take the example of the welfare state. Every advanced industrial society now confronts the fiscal crisis of the welfare state: that is, the growing need for welfare support (driven by changing demographic pressures, for example), coupled with the rising inflationary costs of services and the powerful popular demand to put a ceiling on the tax burden levied on individual families. We know how Thatcherism addressed this question. Submit the welfare system to the discipline of the free market (ie, real costs); abandon the commitment to a universal system of support and shift the ideology of welfare towards targeting particular vulnerable minorities only (ie, make it cheaper); undermine the local basis of service provision by privatisation and rate-cappings; establish the priority of tax cuts and value-for-money for the taxpayer above that of the welfare client populations. We know the havoc, the social dislocation, the widespread misery this precipitated. But it did address the underlying issue – the steadily rising cost of welfare and the highly sensitive level of public taxation.

That is the problem – and Thatcherism's solution. And what of Labour? The question, in a way, answers itself. It has let it be assumed that Labour will 'do something about restoring the welfare state which Thatcherism savaged'. But exactly what and how remains a mystery. How it will fund the rising cost of a restored and expanded welfare state has never been publicly posed as an issue. The electorate does not really understand what the underlying problem is, while no sustained effort has been made to construct an alternative 'higher taxation' consensus, even among that large section of the population who keep telling the opinion pollsters that they are willing to pay higher taxes if they get better welfare services from them. The social philosophy which must underpin a welfare society has no articulate Labour proponents.

The low tax/taxpayer-as-king ideology, around which Thatcherism constructed its ideological assault on the politics of welfare, remains undiscussed, unanalysed; no alternative strategy has appeared; no alternative consensus has been built. If Labour's thinking on this issue has evolved into an alternative political strategy, then it is one of its best kept secrets. The political consequences are plain for all to see. There are really only three alternatives. In office, Labour is unable to deliver on the keystone commitment to welfare – and loses its support among the 'welfare state' majorities. Or it tries to deliver in office, but having failed to prepare the ground or build a majority around its strategy, it runs into the unreconstructed brick wall of the 'taxpayer philosophy' – and succumbs to it. Same result. Or, third, it discovers in office the harsh realities it failed to confront intellectually while in opposition, and doesn't even try. Disillusionment all round – not for the first time with Labour governments. This is a strategy guaranteed to get you elected for one term only. And its cause is a failure of intellectual and political nerve; the error of believing that, if you avoid the difficult questions and the construction of popular majorities, nobody will notice and you will glide unnoticed into office.

'Labour's revolution lacks intellectual energy: its parameters have been determined, not by its own distinctive project, but by Thatcherism'

This brings us to the other reason why Labour's intellectual revolution lacks intellectual energy: its parameters have been determined, not by its own distinctive project, but by Thatcherism. Labour's strategy lives by courtesy of Thatcherism, by what is judged to be possible in the context of the Thatcher revolution. Here it is worth pondering the difference between Thatcherism and the 'Kinnock revolution'. The former was driven by its strategic ambition to transform society; the Kinnock revolution is revolutionary only in the sense of what it has jettisoned from Labour's past. It has no positive ambition to remould society and no concrete image of what such a Labour-transformed society would be like. Consequently, people may vote for it because it is less harsh, abrasive, inegalitarian and inhuman than Thatcherism; but not for its positive qualities. The Kinnock revolution lives in the shadow of Thatcherism, judging what is impossible on the basis of the opinion polls, its vision rarely extending beyond the relatively immediate. It is this which explains the overwhelming intellectual timidity of Labour's approach and reflexes. Paradoxically, it is Thatcherism which provides Labour with its only sense of modernity.

It is worth spelling out the nature of that timidity. It is not a fear of appearing 'too left', as the Labour Left sometimes puts it, since many of the really knotty problems which confront Labour cannot easily be represented on the old left-right spectrum. Many of these issues are the product of the 'new times' through which we are passing, and have out-run the well-tried limits of Labourism. They require that the Left re-think many of its traditional positions. The timidity that counts, then, is the refusal to engage in the new thinking required by the problems which society presents to the Left: the thinking occasioned by the fact that, in the 1980s, some of the Left's most cherished solutions have been shown to be woefully inadequate.

For example: if (taking the lessons of Thatcherism on board) unregulated market forces always produce deeply unequal and oppressive outcomes, and (taking the lessons of the state-socialist regimes on board) the Left was wrong in believing that the state should become the universal caretaker of society, and (taking the lessons of the postwar years on board) statist forms of nationalisa-

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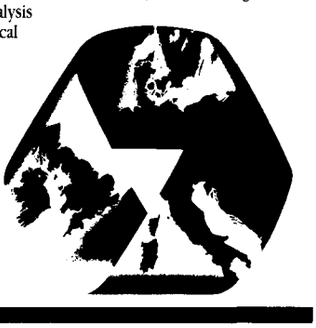

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tion neither empower consumers nor workers, nor solve the economic problems of key economic sectors: then what should be the balance – the 'historic compromise' – between international economic forces, national state, local state, private sector and consumer representation in Labour's new 'democratic socialist' dispensation? Or to put the question more modestly, can anyone think of a single thought of any great significance on this historic question, which has just ripped half of Europe asunder, uttered by a single member of the Labour frontbench in the last five years?

Or take education. Neil Kinnock was right to highlight education in his speech at the Labour Party conference. But there was little that he said about education that could not have fallen from Harold Wilson's lips in 1964. Yet education has enormous potential as an issue. The Tories understand this, but their philosophy prevents them from exploiting it. Either they want to expand the system while reducing its funding base (higher education) or they are so committed to undermining the state education system that they cannot satisfy the parental aspirations and educational needs of the majority whose educational chances depend on it (secondary education). There is, however, a real and genuine problem of teaching standards and a real crisis in teaching as a profession (both unaddressed by Labour), which will continue to erode and undermine public confidence in schooling unless directly confronted.

There is an economic dimension to the education issue – the immense expansion in the knowledge and information 'base' required for modern advanced societies, which plays right into Labour's hands, for it aligns the economic logic of expanding educational funding with a democratic educational strategy. And there is a social dimension – the 'new' skills which men and women, of all races and class backgrounds, now know they need access to in order to become full citizens in the new world which is emerging. If one were asked to design, on a drawing board, an issue which combined popular democratic aspirations with an expansionist economic strategy, it would be hard to dream up a better one. And yet, there is no popular mobilisation by Labour around education, no new perspectives, no emerging alliance between teachers, parents and students, no strategic commitment to opening up or funding access.

An even more stunning example is provided by Europe. Labour has cleverly exploited Thatcherism's divided loyalties on the issue. But when it comes to its own position, Labour is, to put it bluntly, shifty. Does Labour support a single currency or not? The racist banalities of Tebbit and Ridley aside, is there a real issue about sovereignty and if so, what is it? Of course, Labour has moved on Europe. But what is needed is not movement but a double transformation. The first is to embrace the fact that Britain's future lies within Europe. So far the political debate on either side has got little beyond recognising that our membership of the EC is a political fact. To embrace such a European future requires Labour to endorse monetary union. But more it requires Labour to take on the sovereignty argument, which so far it has singularly failed to do, and acknowledge publicly that sovereignty has declined and will decline more: and that parts of it can only be recuperated in a European context.

But there is a second, broader dimension. Labour must take responsibility for moving the argument beyond simply the EC as it is and the EC debates as they are now. The EC is a highly undemocratic institution whose decisions are not popularly accountable. It represents only a part of Europe at a time when the whole meaning and definition of Europe has changed as a result of the events of 1989. And it is rapidly reproducing, indeed, exacerbating the old North/South, developed/underdeveloped divide. A whole new vision of Europe – together with a new set of settlements (east/west Europe, Europe and the Third World) – needs to engendered and embedded in a popular culture which might be summed up in the term European, if Britain is not to slide further into the trough of cultural nationalism.

The chances of Labour inheriting the mantle of the post-Thatcher era look better with every passing day. But its ambitions for that era remain profoundly restricted. They are shaped by an intellectual legacy which is more a response to the postwar boom than the late 20th-century. Even in Thatcherism's death throes, Labour is still unable to break out of the former's shadow. And even when it does – as in its focus on education – it is prone to regress into its past in the terms of its agenda. Labour in short, has no project of its own. Nothing illustrates this more clearly than its failure to identify the social groups that might act as the symbolic bearers of its aspirations for society. Thatcherism had them, so did the 1945 Labour government. As yet the present-day Labour Party does not. Yet any serious reforming project must tap into and establish a rapport with the expansive, dynamic social groups in society.

It is not difficult to guess what they might be in the 90s. Firstly, there is the highly-skilled, highly-educated salariat – the technicians, the managers, the computer experts – in leading-edge, hi-tech industry, in both the network of small companies and the research centres of international firms. These groups, which are not to be confused with That-cherism's self-made entrepreneurs, are likely to contribute disproportionately to the tone of the 90s. They are European-oriented, environmentally-concerned, and particularly sensitive to the importance of education. They are also concentrated for the most part in the south of England.

Secondly, there are the emergent, increasingly self-confident regional identities in the north. No one social group is the bearer of this new mood, though youth culture is as good a candidate as any. This new sense of civic and regional identity is partly a reaction to a decade of southern dominance, but it is also about developing a new sense of awareness in a European and even (in the case of the Olympics) global context. Thirdly, women will be a dynamic social force in the coming decade. By the end of the millennium they will comprise half the workforce: such a transformation will mean growing pressure for flexibility – at work and in social provision. In combination with the new demographic pressures, women will be the cutting-edge of a flexible social revolution and the dismantling of older structures and practices.

'A party which lacks an original analysis of society, which has no clear idea of where it wants society to go, is likely to run rapidly out of steam'

The nature of Labour's intellectual revolution has much to suggest about the likely character of a Kinnock government. A good deal of attention has been focused on the likelihood of it rapidly getting into economic difficulties, as has been the wont of previous Labour governments. Here it is worth pondering the difference between Wilson and Kinnock. Kinnock's greatest quality as a party leader has been his willingness to have his internal conflicts in public. He has eschewed smoke-filled rooms and the fix-it solution. The result has been that his victories have been real ones, rooted in a shift in attitudes and perceptions. There is every reason to believe that he would be like that as prime minister. He would have a sense of priorities and he would make them stick.

The problem with a Kinnock government is likely to be somewhat different. A party which lacks an original analysis of society, which has no clear idea of where it wants society to go, and whose project is so obviously derivative, is likely to run rapidly out of steam. In this respect it will surely resemble earlier Labour administrations rather than the Thatcher governments. The latter have been rare in their ability to recharge their batteries while in office: it is only in the third term that they have lost their way, and that has had more to do with alienating their popular base than intellectual exhaustion. Running out of steam in the tranquil 60s, like the Wilson governments, however, was one thing: the 90s will be a quite different proposition. The economic problems are likely to be formidable, while the speed of change in the world suggests that a government will require an ability to think on its feet, which can only be done successfully if it is based on solid intellectual foundations.●

Stuart Hall and Martin Jacques co-edited New Times (Lawrence and Wishart).

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The Moment Of Truth

The events of 1989 plunged Communist Parties throughout the world into a state of crisis. The CPGB is no exception. This month it is holding a special congress to decide on its future. Should it transform itself? Should it find a new name? Should it become an association? Should it wind up? **Nina Temple**, **Monty Johnstone** and **Beatrix Campbell** give their rather different views

The 'enterprise society' that Thatcher's children have been reared on has turned out to be no more than the 'creed of greed'. This generation to whom socialism conjures up images of Tiananmen Square and Ceaucescu won't be convinced by glib cliches about state planning or redistribution.

As the election approaches, Labour is determined to avoid hostages to fortune. But its appeals to 'forget about what may be and do what is possible' fire no passions.

What is needed is the political imagination to take the values of equality, co-operation and solidarity, and fuse them inseparably with the touchstone of individual liberty. To grasp hold of and develop convincing visions for the great issues of our time: human survival and protection of the environment, underdevelopment and debt, overpopulation, citizenship, the nature of work, and the future of the family. And to see how these issues will fit in a new settlement of power away from the nation-state towards European, global and more local institutions.

The *Manifesto For New Times*, initiated in articles in *Marxism Today* and developed into a strategic intervention by the Communist Party, embraces this vision but the party itself is a totally inadequate vessel for this politics.

Although rooted in the British socialist tradition, the party bore a heavy Soviet stamp which it progressively broke from in the post war years. The party was able to educate and organise an earlier generation of working class activists, but was slow to respond to the changing nature of class and the challenges of anti-racism, feminism and cultural politics.

The party structures were cast in the mould of the Bolshevik Party of 1917 and did not move on. They are still top-down stifling and unresponsive. They restrict rather than facilitate people getting together and taking initiatives.

As a result, the party has been declining relentlessly for decades and would on present trends cease to exist in 1994. This year it has been involved in a no-holds-barred discussion about itself and its future. Seeking new forms to facilitate its politics.

The resolution before the National Congress in December advocates *both* the radical transformation of the party and initiatives to help start a new association.

The transformed party would develop strategies and policies, publicise them and campaign for them and work in broad progressive movements to create a more progressive political climate. This will involve tearing up the leninist rule book and adopting a new constitution. It will be deliberately new times, based on team working and effective communication both with itself and with its environment.

Steps to initiate the development of a cross party political association, will aim to draw people together to explore a new vision for Britain, and a new political settlement. This would seek to develop the politics of co-operation and alliance between progressive parties and movements needed to bring about radical dynamic change in society.

The growing inequalities and undemocratic concentrations of power in our society must be challenged by an active and strategic politics. The Communist Party needs courage and conviction to make the dramatic and necessary changes. It must reshape itself if it is to be an active participant in reshaping new times.

Nina Temple is secretary of the CP

Last year's events in eastern Europe and the Soviet Union's deepening problems are widely seen as signifying the failure of communism and entailing effectively the end of the Communist Party. The ongoing international Communist crisis has certainly hit British Communists hard. However, what has failed, in my view, is not the Communist project of a socialist society based on social ownership and democratic control, but a bureaucratic and oppressive stalinist caricature of it, long criticised by British Communists.

The Communist Party was formed to offer marxist analysis and leadership in struggle against capitalism here. Events in eastern Europe have done nothing to lessen the case for this. Enormous power remains concentrated in the hands of huge, increasingly international, companies which subordinate human beings and the environment to the drive for profit.

Kinnock has secured the removal of more and more socialist elements from Labour's programme. There is a need for a Communist Party uniting with others on the left to oppose Labour's drift to the right. The election of a Labour government, for which Communists should be working, will make this even more necessary.

The Left can benefit from a renewed Communist Party, actively participating in day-to-day political, industrial and social struggles, able to project its strategic analysis and socialist perspectives into the broader Labour and trade union movement. The party's decline means that it can at present only do this on a modest scale (foregoing parliamentary contests) with no guarantee of success. But the effort is worth making.

There are others in and around the Labour and trade union left and organisations like the Socialist Society and the Socialist Movement with whom Communists share many fundamental ideas. They should be discussing common perspectives together, seeking to build the basis ultimately for the creation of a larger socialist party based on non-dogmatic marxism with feminist and green dimensions, into which the Communist Party should, I believe, be willing to merge. It would thereby give up its separate Communist name and identity. I can see no advantage in doing so before the realisation of such socialist unity.

Nor do I consider there to be any basis for the proposal put forward by the

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majority of the Communist Party's executive committee to involve the party in helping launch in early 1991 a new, vaguely conceived, broader formation to exist alongside itself. There are any number of broad formations already existing, from trades unions to new social movements, in which Communists should be working, without suddenly trying to initiate another one.

Even less do I agree with the proposal of a minority of the party's executive to dissolve the Communist Party and form an ill-defined political association without any single comprehensive viewpoint, and I strongly reject the minority's assertion that 'the existing assets of the Communist Party would be transferred to a Trust Fund' not controlled by the membership of the new association.

I believe that the Communist congress this month should and will decide in favour of retaining the Communist Party and transforming along more drastic lines.

Monty Johnstone is a writer on Soviet and east European politcs and is a member of the CP

The best things about the communist tradition in Britain have been those which expressed a critique of its own tradition, which was created to sustain the Bolshevik moment in 1917 – one-party statism and authoritarianism in the market, in politics and in civil society. We have to be careful with ourselves when we talk about the death of communism. For sure, 1989 was the death of communism. But 1917 was also the death of communisms no less concerned with exploitation and oppression, but happier to live with the mechanism of the market and the agreeable chaos of civil society.

Unlike any other political party the Communist Party alone has tried to take responsibility for the culture it has created and its consequences. In the 1980s it extended the critique to much of the labour movement Left, because British labourism and communism often share the semaphore of centralism and conquest, they often inhabit the same childless twilight in the union office or the saloon bar where conversation is rhetoric or confrontation, and where community is committee. The Communist Party has not been forgiven for its critique, but that's what enabled many to stay with it, well after the promise that a butterfly might emerge from the chrysalis of self-critical communism was extinguished. That happened in the second half of the 70s, when a failure of nerve stopped the party flying into the future.

It was, nevertheless, sometimes courageous, and that's why many people still kept their cards. It seemed to be the only part of British marxism that was holding on by letting go. Communists participation in political construction increasingly happened elsewhere. Sometimes, as with some of communist feminism's creations, or with *Marxism Today*, creative construction shared the same address, but that's just about all. They were estranged co-habitees. The Communist Party – as communist rather that a radical party was both energised and yet exhausted by intelligent despair after 1968 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia, and again after 1979 and Thatcherism, and certainly after the splits and realignments of the 1980s.

The raison d'etre was Communists, critique of their own orthodoxies, albeit constrained by the fact the party still shared the same international address as communisms' culprits. 1989 ended all that. It was all over. A party cannot live by critique alone, critique isn't a politics. So what can Communists be if the object of the critique self-destructs?

Well, it could stop being a communist party. It could emerge from its becalmed coterie, conserve its assets and in the interim contemplate politics which aren't about powering the narcissistic project of the vanguard party, but are guided by a different discipline of servicing not only struggle against exploitation and oppression but also a candid, companionable and co-operative way of being.

In 1989 I almost gave up my party card, but decided to keep it to take part in the end. What I want is a party – as in cocktail – to say the party's over.

Bea Campbell is a writer and broadcaster. She is a member of the CP

The first question is the relationship to the past. If the past requests the big lie for communism, then that history has to be severed, it cannot be continued. If there is something of value in its heritage then some lines of continuity need to be preserved. The second question is the overall future of political parties. There is a significant loss of popular faith in their ability to offer political leadership in many countries, not least Britain. The third question in the need for a radical political organisation to exist independent of, though not necessarily hostile to, the Labour Party. What happens to the Communist Party rests on these considerations.

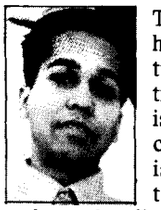
Sarah Benton, political commentator, former member of the CP

My modest suggestion is that the Communist Party should turn itself into the 'Radical Communist Forum'. Its function would be to do what the Labour Party today so sadly fails to do – stimulate radical socialist thought and action in a democratic, non-sectarian style.

Bruce Kent, vice president of CND

In the course of history, many noble people have fought nobel causes under the banner of communism. People have also committed terrible crimes and mistakes, under the same banner. The two should not be confused. The political project which started with the October revolution has now come to a final dead end. Therefore, I cannot see any future for a communist project in the tradition of 1917. But the struggles between Left and Right will continue.

Göran Therborn, professor of Sociology at Gothenberg University

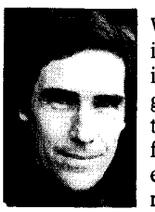


The Communist Party has to develop a structure which reflects a transformed politics that is progressive, democratic and interventionist. It must be a politics that empowers people and speaks directly to their cultural experience. Our politics must be multicultural, we need to be flexible and less Eurocentric. The party must develop a cultural project which identifies and captures the creativity and needs of young people. There must be a progressive 'Gazza' to reflect the culture of the Left – you never know!

Sayeed Alim, publisher of City X, a listings magazine for the Midlands and member of the CP

The Communist Party has got a future, a present and a past. From where I stand in the Scottish Labour and trade union movement, I can see the role of the Scottish Communist Party quite clearly and its influence on the Scottish political scene – for example in the fight for a Scottish parliament and in the broad campaign against the poll tax.

George Bolton, president of the Scottish NUM, and a member of the CP



Wind it up. Wind it up immediately. Communism is an ideal in disgrace and it can't escape the opprobrium that has fallen on the ideal everywhere. It's just not enough for the Communist Party to try to distance itself from that disgrace. They can't go on claiming that communism will work in the end if it is given a proper chance. All the idealism in the party should be directed towards other movements and issues.

Those who think capitalism is inherently environmentally destructive should go and work for Greenpeace. Those who think that capitalism is inherently warlike should go and work for CND. I don't personally accept either of these propositions. But I do believe that the future lies in movements not in political parties, not in the Labour Party but in lawful extra-parliamentary action. Wind it up now.

Michael Ignatieff, broadcaster and columnist on The Observer

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DESIGN dire

The design industry has crashed into recession. One of the most dynamic industries of the 80s is now becoming a symbol of uncertainty in the 90s. But it's not just an economic crisis. There are also new intellectual challenges. In our special survey **Alice Rawsthorn** explores future directions for the industry. **Neville Brody**, **John Thackara** and other design experts outline their own views of the situation. **Rick Poynor**, editor of the newly-launched quarterly *Eye, The International Review Of Graphic Design*, investigates the impact of new technology on graphic design. Finally, in a story written specially for *Marxism Today*, **Chris Savage King** presents a vision of a Britain where new ideas are thin on the ground.

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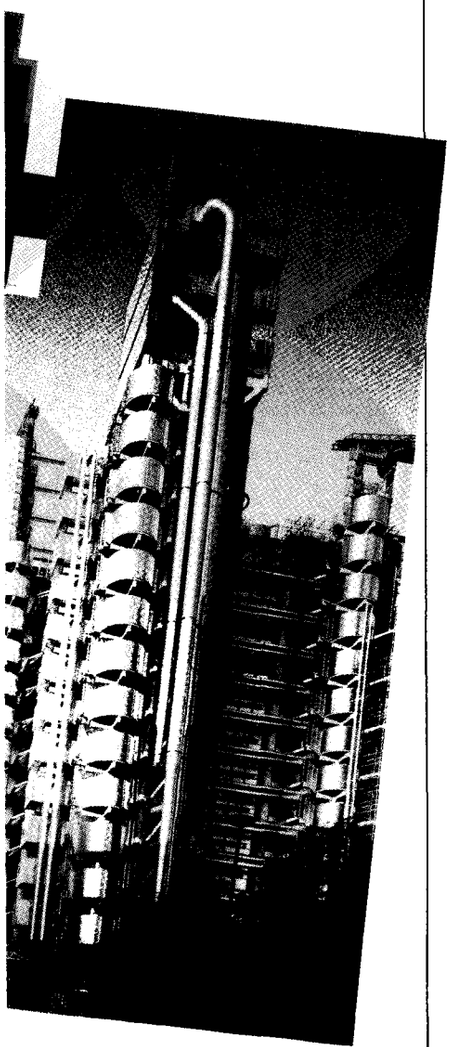

One by one, the go-go industries of the 1980s have turned into casualties since the start of this year. One of the biggest casualties of all has been the design industry. The design industry flourished in the 1980s. It started the decade as a tiny cottage industry composed of small companies generally owned and run by the same entrepreneur. It ended the 1980s as a larger, more sophisticated industry. Some design consultancies had floated on the stock market. Others had expanded into other countries. The 1980s was not dubbed the 'design decade' for nothing.

But in 1990, as the economy has slowed down, the design industry has crashed into recession. Most of the larger consultancies have been forced to cut costs by shedding staff. Some smaller consultancies have been forced out of business. This summer a shockwave went through the whole industry when the Michael Peters Group, once one of Britain's biggest and most successful design consultancies, was forced to call in the receivers.

But the economic recession is not the only source of concern for the design community. If anything it has tended to distract attention from the longer term, more complex problem of adjusting to the new intellectual and cultural agenda of the 1990s.

Nevertheless it would be naive to underestimate the industry's economic problems. The combination of sluggish consumer spending and intense pressure on corporate profits has forced the same companies that lavished money on post-modernist shop-fronts and candy-coloured packaging in the 1980s to slice their design budgets in the early 1990s.

In simple terms these companies have been forced to find more money to cover the interest on their debts and have hence had less left over to spend on design. This problem has been especially severe in some sectors, such as retailing, which invested heavily in design in the 1980s, where many major companies, such as Next and Storehouse (which owns Habitat and BHS) are now in serious financial difficulty.

Other service sector industries have also been affected by the economic recession, but the design industry seems to have suffered more than most, with the possible exception of advertising. This is largely because, despite its growth in the 1980s, design still retains some of the characteristics of a cottage industry.

Some consultancies, like Fitch and Wolff Olins, may have grown larger and more internationalised, but the industry is still dominated by small, entrepreneurial firms. Weak management and poor financial controls are commonplace. Michael Peters did not go under because its designs were weak. Its consultancies were still winning awards and new projects until the bitter end. Peters failed because the same management team that had created a dynamic London design consultancy was simply not capable of running a publicly quoted international group of companies.

The structural weaknesses of companies like Peters could be contained in the days when the design market was buoyant. But when the economy lurched into recession – and the design market dived down to the doldrums – these weaknesses became serious problems.

But the industry's economic problems have been aggravated by its intellectual crisis: by the challenge of adapting to the new cultural climate. The intellectual agenda for design in the 1980s, as well as for the related disciplines of art and architecture, was dominated by post-modernism: by the abandonment of the modernist ideal.

In many ways the 1980s was an era of intellectual sterility for design. The modernist movement had provided an empathetic environment for the design community, which was, after all, dealing with a discipline involved with function and closely linked to industry, both important tenets of modernism. As design theorists, like John Thackara, have noted, design never really found a role for itself in the post-modernist era.

Design, like art and architecture, tended to deteriorate into jokiness in the 1980s. The cultural images of the decade were generally about jokes. For art, there were Julian Schnabel's broken plates and Jeff Koons' stainless steel bunny; and for architecture, Quinlan Terry's 18th-century clone on the banks of the Thames and Philip Johnson's broken pediment atop the AT&T Tower in New York. The dominant design images were jokey too. The 1980s began with primary coloured furniture blown up into burlesque proportions by Ettore Sottsas' Memphis School in Milan and ended with the three-legged chair devised by Phillipe Starck, the French designer.

Some of the jokes were funny. Others fell flat. But the visual quips and quirks provided a thin disguise for the intellectual emptiness of the era. The emphasis of design had changed from function, towards ornament and eventually deteriorated into playing with surfaces.

This may have pauperised design as an intellectual discipline, but it was an extraordinarily favourable cultural climate for the design industry. After all, the type of design projects executed by the external consultancies that make up the industry, tend to concentrate on the superficial styling, or surface, of a product, not to be enmeshed in the whole cycle of product development.

There are, for example, relatively few product design consultancies in Britain. Instead the industry is dominated by retail consultancies, such as Fitch and McColl; packaging consultancies, like Michael Peters and Lewis Moberly; and corporate identity consultancies; such as Wolff Olins and Lloyd Northover.

These consultancies deal with the type of designs that can be produced from outside, rather than inside, a client company. And, with the possible exception of corporate identity, they tend

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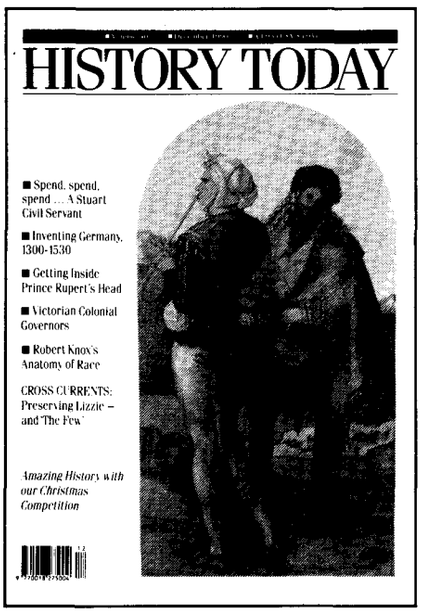
What happened then matters now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Five experts examine the design industry

Design Signals

to emphasise the superficial aspects of design. In short they deal with the type of design which was quite comfortable with postmodernism.

But the intellectual agenda has changed. Artists and architects are as jaded by the japes of postmodernism – the visual cliches of broken plates and pediments – as they were with the monotonous modernism that preceded it. Similarly designers are now disillusioned with superficial styling, or the 'bells and whistles approach', as James Woodhuysen, head of Fitch's Experimental Design Laboratory, calls it.

This disillusion is already apparent in the rhetoric of the design industry. A few years ago design consultancies tended to talk like advertising agencies. Nowadays they hark back to the artisanal era of the arts and craft movement in the 1920s and 1930s with an emphasis on environmental and social responsibility.

The new rhetoric is partly a reaction to the swing in public sentiment against the design dogma of the 1980s: to the fact that the adjective 'designer' no longer suggests that a product is such a status symbol that it can command a premium price, but is now bandied about as pejorative. It is also the design community's response to the new concerns of the 1990s: the cult of authenticity and the growth of environmental awareness.

The cult of authenticity is part of the anti-fashion backlash against the conspicuous consumption of the 1980s. It is already apparent in the fashion arena. On one level there is the sportswear cult of ball caps and trainers that has swept aside the old shoulder-padded styles. On another there is the craze for the classic designs of the old established fashion houses: for Pucci prints and Gucci loafers.

Anti-fashion and authenticity are all to do with form and function – with the quality of materials and the skill of construction – not with the old lust for novelty and self-conscious styling on which the design industry thrived.

Environmentalism is more complex. The new definition of environmental awareness goes further than the old cliche of bio-degradable products in green packaging. It involves an holistic approach of assessing the environmental implications of every aspect of a product's life cycle: from the sourcing of raw materials, to the production process and its eventual disposal or destruction.

It also goes further than the physicality of the product. It considers the condition that Ezio Manzini, the Italian design theorist, has called 'semiological pollution': the cultural chaos of a society dominated by mass media and technological tyranny.

Addressing these issues will be much more difficult for the design industry than dreaming up yet another visual pun as a sop to postmodernism. Such issues are not only intellectually more challenging, but are also less compatible with the concept of an external design consultancy. Severe though its economic problems may be, this is the real crisis facing today's design industry.●

Graphic designer **Neville Brody** sees small as beautiful.

'What we need now is for design to reconsider its goals and the reasons behind its licence to operate. There has to be a new emphasis on creative risk-taking, on danger. I haven't seen any dangerous ideas for a long time. Conveniently forgotten problems need to be addressed and not simply overlooked, or more cynically still, turned into profit.

Design must return to its role of creative pioneering, reflecting social undercurrents and expressing shifts in social consciousness. The current stagnation must be turned into evolution. Design must be made responsible for its actions once again.

In its drive for authority and control, design has forgotten one of its most important functions: education, through both entertainment and information. Instead of polluting the environment with false images, with built-in obsolescence, we should be positively encouraging a visual culture that is inspiring and stimulating to independent thought.

The only way to achieve this is to work on a smaller scale. Huge overheads and onerous commitments to share-holders and the City means no creative risk-taking. The important ideas during the next decade will come from small design groups or individuals; the more human scale of these outfits will allow for a more humanistic attitude to design.'●

Angela Dumas, assistant professor in design management at the London Business School, is optimistic about the future.

'If the clients of design consultancies adopt a more holistic approach to their products and environments in the future, then design consultancies face an opportunity rather than a threat. Their clients hold values close to their own. The design industry combines creative and business services. It is an extremely challenging business for anyone to manage. Given the economic climate, it is surprising that the design industry has held up as well as it has. It says a lot for the strength of its roots in small entrepreneurial firms. British industry is beset with structural weaknesses, those of the design industry and its quality of financial management are no higher than average.'●

John Thackara, managing director of Design International and director of research at the Royal College of Art, outlines a challenge facing the design industry.

'The design boom of the 80s was part of a generalised expansion of marketing services, ranging from advertising to sponsorship, which is now a $640 billion industry. But this perception industry was limited in its impact on the way organisations behave, or 'learn'. Industry now faces the entirely new challenge of modifying its organisations, processes and cultures.

Design, design management and design research have a strategically important role to play in key aspects of this new scenario. I have in mind areas such as the visualisation of scientific and information phenomena; skills and knowledge transfer; flexible specialisation in production; managing the convergence of technologies; managing the convergence of new media; the organisation of links with higher education.

These new territories for design combine substantive fields of product development with new management and research

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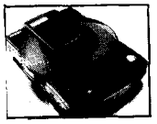
delivery systems. For industry, creating a research agenda and implementing its results are now features of a single process. If it is to develop a learning culture, industry needs to foster forms of organisation that combine intra-organisation collaboration with multi-disciplinary outputs.

The problem is that both these features are more or less directly opposed to mainstream industrial culture in the West. They are, if anything, even more alien to the design professions and to higher education, whose hostility to new ways of working is legendary.'●



Richard Seymour, founding partner of product design consultancy, Seymour Powell, looks beyond the 'designer decade'.

'To a large extent the idea that the 80s was a 'designer decade' was a media construct. It is true that there was a certain amount of trivial styling and glossing but that isn't the whole story. In product design, for example, we tend to work on products with a lead time of four to five years. This develops a different way of looking at design problems and can produce a profound sense of responsibility and an awareness that in a sense we are helping to shape the future.

It is clear that some clients are looking beyond the fast buck and want a more responsible design service. Seymour Powell isn't so much a profit-driven business as a life-support system which allows us to do the work we want. For me design is a calling, one of the caring professions. I would seriously question the ability of organisations that are driven mercilessly by finance to play that role.'●

Peter Saville at Pentagram Design Ltd, the company which redesigned *The Guardian*, looks back on the 80s.

'I would pinpoint the mid-80s as the time when things began to change in the design industry. The concept of merely 'styling' a solution, particularly in graphic design began to seem inadequate. The leading-edge became those people who were looking for something more substantial than style. There was a greater awareness of the importance of finding an appropriate solution for the client, rather than just the latest 'story' which would become dated very quickly.

This was the period, of course, when the design business was growing rapidly, servicing companies such as NEXT, who were setting the pace of a resurgence of the 'lifestyle' package. This in itself was nothing particularly new – the United States had experienced its American Dream in the 1950s. As the design companies grew substantially to service the expanding lifestyle industries, they developed a 'Wall Street' mentality of their own with their directors wanting the respect of the business community.

However, the profit motive of business is somewhat at odds with the process of producing design. Traditionally, and spiritually, a designer always wants to do the best possible job. When this conflicts with business interests, the quality of work suffers. The 80s saw a reducing quality of work at a time when there were deep structural economic problems in Britain, which were merely being covered by our credit-based retail boom.

The seeds were sown for the problems currently facing our design industry. Also as the design companies had become larger they had become more expensive and less personal. There is an interest now in using design companies where the client can obtain personal service and identify the person who is doing the work. However, larger clients obviously still require the capacity of a large design group.

Another change has come about with the advent of design technologies, particularly the Apple Macintosh. Theoretically, this technology allows fewer people to do more work, more efficiently and more accurately. By using modems, these workstations can be linked locally or internationally, providing greater scope for project co-ordination and liaison.●

Rick Poynor on new technology and graphic design

Image Machine

A decade ago, the idea that inky-fingered graphic designers might one day set aside their cow gum, scalpels, and drawings boards for a working life at the computer screen would have seemed wildly optimistic. These days it is more of a surprise to visit a London design studio and find that they are still pushing round bits of photocopied type in the time-honoured fashion. Everywhere you go you see the same computer. The Apple Macintosh enjoys a hegemony in the field of graphic design that even IBM could not have boasted when it introduced its PC to business users in the early 1980s.

Nor is it simply a matter of appearances, though the mystique of the box (beautiful enough to be fetishised as a cult object) and the brilliance of the marketing (computer as lifestyle accessory) have undoubtedly helped. The Macintosh fulfils the utopian promise of all desktop computer systems by delivering previously inaccessible levels of power, at a reasonable cost, into the hands of ordinary users. It allows designers to visualise ideas and explore alternatives with a freedom impossible when typesetting could only be bought from external agencies running expensive equipment.

In return for the computer's services as a production slave, designers are willing to make a Faustian pact with a technology that transforms them into keyboard operators. But the systems have other, more far-reaching implications. The Macintosh reconnects designers with areas of typographic craft that have long been the domain of specialised typefounders, and unites these formerly disparate functions in a single accessible tool. As Berlin-based type designer Erik Spiekermann puts it: 'What (the Macintosh) offers is a return in a romantic way to the Gutenburg days, where the typographer does it all. He designs his own type, cuts it, casts it, then makes up pages of it and prints it.'

The once prohibitively expensive task of putting a typeface into production – the province of international companies like Monotype, Linotype and Berthold – can now, in theory, be emulated by anyone with a copy of a Macintosh-type design program. The new typeface is created on a disk and distributed as software in the same way. This allows a far more casual and experimental approach than would ever have been possible in the past, since a failure is no longer a financial disaster. It also opens the field, for better or worse, to the non-expert.

Perhaps the most organised of the digital-type evangelists is Emigre Graphics from Berkeley, California. Emigre type-designer Zuzana Licko – a self-styled 'new primitive', who argues, citing Gothic black letter faces, that legibility is what you are accustomed to seeing – has produced a stream of fash-

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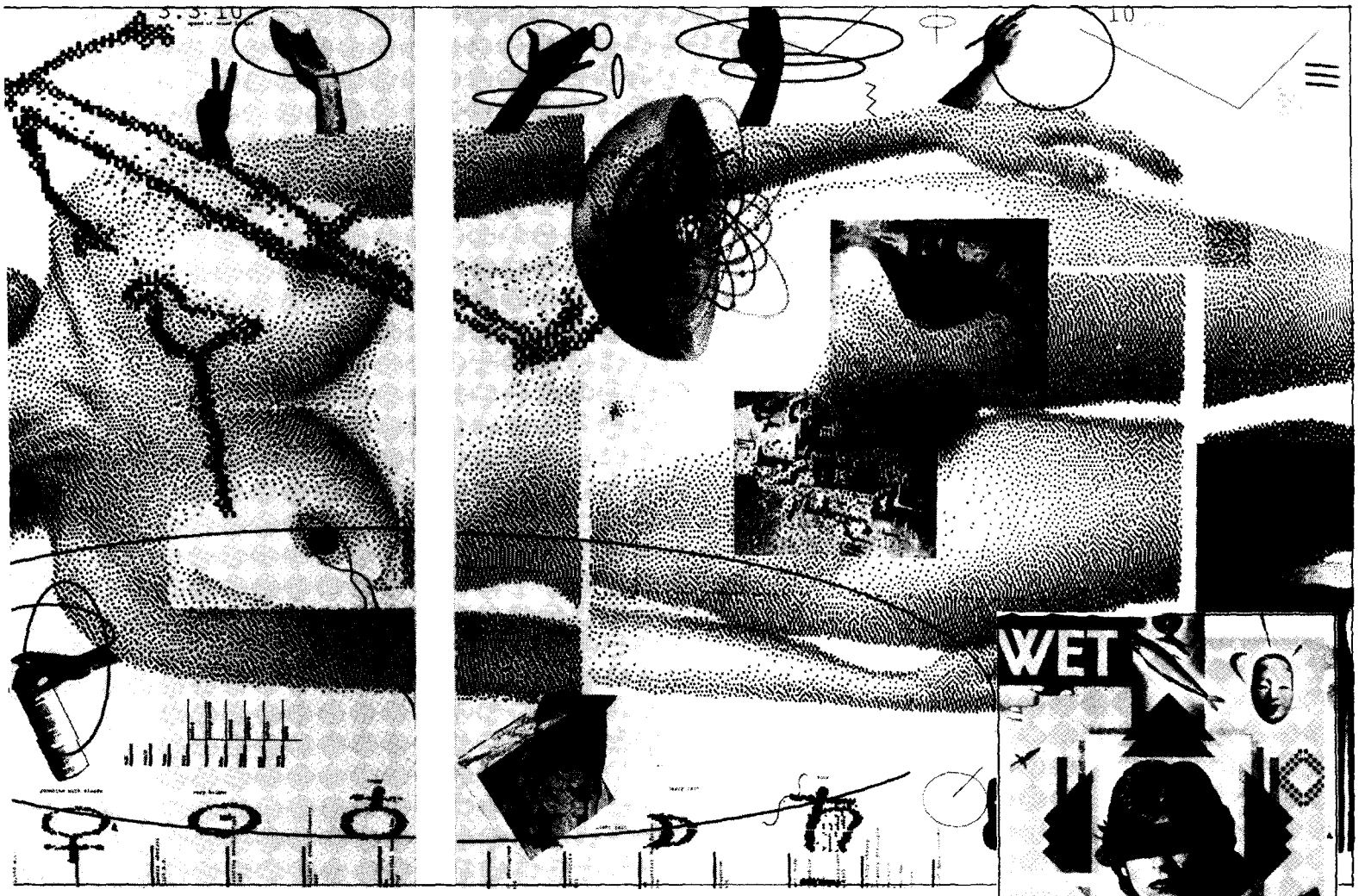

Towards a technologically driven paradise: April Greiman's vision of the future

ionable, geometrical typefaces suited to the flawed, low-resolution output of the Macintosh laser printer. Now, recognising that the typeface revolution will happen with or without them, even traditional type designers are talking of a time when everybody will have their own personalised font, as individual and expressive as handwriting.

Whether the Macintosh has contributed much to the quality of graphic design is a vigorously debated point. Younger designers reared on the computers at college can see no other viable way of working but the old guard is naturally suspicious, not least of the hype. Milton Glaser, elder statesman of American graphics, describes the computer as a 'frightfully dangerous toy... an incredibly clumsy instrument', and deplores the way that computer classes have replaced the colleges' traditional emphasis on life-drawing, with its quasi-mystical privileging of the relationship between eye and hand.

Certainly the Macintosh's British converts have produced little so far to suggest that the machine is an indispensable design (as opposed to production) tool. In some cases, work is noticeably weaker after the installation of the equipment, as designers find their ideas outrun their abilities at the keyboard, or begin to fit their designs to the constraints of the software. Since everybody makes identical discoveries at the same point on the learning curve, there is a tendency for the work of previously quite different stylists to look boringly alike. Those clumsy overlapping headlines you see in *The Face* and elsewhere are all produced on the Macintosh.

In fairness, though, it is early days. The computer was introduced in 1984, but it is only in the last couple of years that it has gained a real hold. To see what a designer of vision can do with the Macintosh – especially in combination with video and electronic 'paintbox' effects – consider the work of April Greiman, who bought her computer the year it was launched.

According to Greiman, a Californian 'technosurrealist' dreamer of the first order, we are at the dawn of a new age of digital communication in which all media (image, sound, text and music) will collapse into a single desktop tool, the Macintosh to end all Macintoshes, a miraculous 'metamedium' which might just become the basis of a new global language and culture. At this point, runs the theory, out-moded structures of information and communication will be transcended by a new 'poetic unity'; old-fashioned separation and hierarchy by a liberating 'simultaneity'. The details of how this technologically driven paradise is to come about are sketchy, to say the least. In the meantime, Greiman is using the new technology to produce densely textured, multi-layered imagefields more resonant and suggestive than almost anything else on the digital map.●

Rick Poynor is editor of *Eye, The International Review Of Graphic Design.*

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A short story by **Chris Savage King**

Mission Impossible

An unshaven man of no fixed age wearing Benetton slacks and a mildewed yellow cardigan pleads for change from passers-by with an empty MacDonalds milkshake carton. Malcolm lolls under the bridge, watching him closely. Malcolm wonders what the man's doing wrong. If he begged here himself, he thinks he'd make a killing – he knows a lot about form and function.

He works creating images, he's a product promoter. He forgets his job description, it depends on the client's whim. He thinks up ideas to try and convince people that some products and images are better or different from others. It's getting more difficult, it's harder than it sounds. Hence his presence here. He's looking for ideas.

You can get all kinds of ideas from places. Like he used to frequent gay bars a lot. They've run dry recently, nothing new. Right out of ideas – style ideas. They look just the same as everyone else now. He suspects they can't even recognise each other. People like Malcolm are telling them what to do now, and that's bad because he's fresh out of ideas, and he wonders if he'll get all washed up, like them.

But this looks more promising. The environment's great – all this old stuff – black ironwork, grey stone. Nobody's mucked about with it yet. They could film here. Lager, jeans, cars. Gangster-type cars. The people kind of spoil it. They don't look weird or threatening enough. There aren't any 'new women', but that figures. They just can't be done much under 15k pa. People like Malcolm have taken care of that. Women used to have ideas, they don't anymore. People like Malcolm tell them what to do too.

He gets a few ideas from pornography, now and then consulting it in a professional capacity. They're the real experts. World wide. They don't even advertise. They're bigger than Coca Cola. That's what gets him, they don't even advertise. There was this shot of a man pissing into this woman's mouth. It was beautiful – both lyrical and remote.

The rest wasn't up to much. The lingerie was rubbish. Not larky deb stuff, but nylon, acrylic *tat*. The cock lacked conviction. They should've shot him with testosterone to boost it into a real mythical prick. No, they hadn't bothered – made on a shoestring. The colour was thin, washed out and overprinted. It would've been better in black and white. But he used the idea in a drinks ad. A grapefruit and tangerine fizzy drink in a bottle. Bottles are coming back. Only louts drink from cans. They're ecological. You can hit people with them.

It was a pretty hackneyed setting – a tropical jungle, wild animals, birdsong, lots of green and orange. The girl gets caught under a waterfall (of course) but that's where the close-ups come in and do their work. The hard spray of water – over her face, in her mouth *at a certain angle*. Those who knew would get it alright, those who didn't would get it *subliminally*. She rolled the bottle over her breasts, of course (hastily mushed together with sellotape) and knocked the bottle top off on a palm tree. *Nature's Refreshment*. Terrific slogan.

Now this on its own was pretty damn naff, but it was new naff, you-know-I-know-you-know-naff. All he had to do was get in a few sarky camera angles, and everyone would know it was a joke – even the feminists. Irony. He was kind of proud of that. He knows it's one of those handy tools that has been used by the finest stylists of their ages – Pope, Beardsley, Jean-Luc Godard. And now by him – Malcolm Delaney – for *Fritize!* Smash the cultural elite!

Porn's easy to rip off, and it's what everybody wants. It's just a matter of superimposing the product over the flesh. Let's face it – most girls would rather suck a chocolate bar than have a live dick in their mouths these days.

Of course until recently if you wanted classic style, you went to the blacks, or rather, you put them in the pictures. Then things changed. They went on agency lists, they got their portfolios and all of a sudden you couldn't get them to do anything anymore. They wouldn't shimmy and kick their legs. They wouldn't wiggle their adorable bottoms. They couldn't either, they'd lost their knack. Middle-class whitish blacks – didn't work.

Recently they'd just picked kids off the street, offered them a contract, a nice wad of cash. And sometimes these kids would bring something with them that the agency-signed-sealed-and-delivered blacks didn't have. Some small thing – a gesture, a piece of clothing, a facial tic, or a cute verbal mannerism the creative dept. hadn't got round to yet. But the market had waned. They'd done research. The con-

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Illustration: Tamsin Holmes

sumer was sick of all these darkies about. They've saturated the market. Now blacks are *verboten* unless they're very black. You have to import them from France.

Yet with an environment like this! It's different, it's got potential. You could *shoot it straight*. No fancy tricks. Just the real thing. That's what they were after. Real...authentic...and *crucial*. There was a meeting earlier in the week. They'd done everything, the chairman said. They all listened, tapping Pentels on capped teeth, table tops, files, watches, coffee cups, all tapping with caffeine twitches. Malcolm nodded his head as he listened, like he used to nod his head to songs about times-a-changin', and blues songs sung by white boys about kickin' yaar wuhumahn arana flawr. Well dodgy now, of course. He listens to authentic African music these days. Nobody knows what that's about.

The chairman looked sorrowful. We've done the Americas: festive Latin, wasted Central. Gone through the Stalin look, the Eurolook...no one wants to touch the Maoist look just now. We've got no choice, we've got to go back to basics. 'Back To Basics,' they all murmured.

Look at tradition, the English heritage. The British love their people, as they love their castles, their monarchy and their sweet thatched cottages. Love them as much as their wise country folk, their colonels, their Yuppies, their burly little punks. Our own creations! They're giving us nothing new. Look at something new, something we haven't done.

So here's Malcolm looking at the British tramp, the beloved classical British tramp. Except he isn't. Where's his scruffy black raincoat? Where is the poignant string waistband of old? Malcolm nearly weeps. Going, going, gone, the way of the great red phone box.

He watches the man – get a new angle...Benetton slacks, yeah with MacDonalds... pretty witty. Embracing the new world market perhaps. He is using irony in his own way, this man. He'd ruined it with the cardigan. It didn't fit – physically, conceptually. The slacks hadn't worn well – too baggy. And he didn't look sporty, bent over like that. He was bent over in the wrong sort of way. Malcolm knows this particular bent over look stems from deprivation, not introspection, and while anxiety is in, depression is way out. They did the 30s years ago.

But they could do something about that. Get him an overcoat. Then the face. The stubble was fine, the dirt was *great*. It could be very urban, or ultra rustic. At a pinch, with new clothes, he could just about pass as the more rugged type of new man. House purchase. TV dinners.

He approaches the man. He'll offer him a job. He's close to the man, close enough to smell him. It's unbearable – he reels back, horrified. Alcohol. Urine. Mould. Old sweat. 'Got some money for a cuppa tea?'

Tea? With a milkshake carton! Baaad co-ordination! He leans towards the man, in spite of himself. 'Got any spare change, mate?' That was better. Simple and direct. The man's breath is pure, so the insides are clean, it's just the outside that's a mess. He must be getting his roughage somewhere then. Newspapers? Chewy scraps from dustbins? Rats?

There are some brass coins in the man's MacDonalds carton. Malcolm wonders when they are going to be discontinued. It can't be far off. A pity really. Pretty colours – the delicious zinc n' copper mix. Fantastic design values, those pennies, 2ps. Better than the carton, on reflection. But no – oh that *smell!* The teeth they could fix. Getting him a regular bath might prove a problem. There are things people should take care of for themselves.

Malcolm slips him 50p, it's all he's earned. There are other ways of doing this – more successful ways. Like on the tube they get these grubby little kids approaching you. Now they had it, yes, they could use a few of those. Victorian retro chic. Due for a re-run. Maybe they could renovate the apocalyptic look.

Insurance? Private schooling? Personal Health Scheme? He returns to his office and realises with a chill he lost sight of his brief too early in the assignment. He'd gone on what he knew, discovered nothing new, as everyone, even beggars, know what he knows now, even if they're slipshod on a few minor details. Bad forward planning. Not enough vision. He shivers, he might be out of a job. He might be obliged to adjust his lifestyle accordingly. The choice isn't with him, not in his hands now – none of the choices worthy of the name. They used to call that politics. Hell – he should worry! Now it's Party Politics. He sells that too.●

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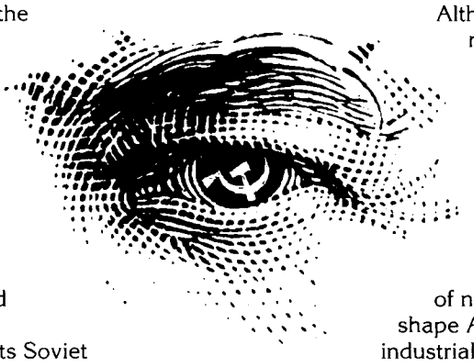

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BOOKS

Kim Hendry on the making of an eco-martyr

Burnt Offerings

The transformation of Chico Mendes from obscure Amazonian rural workers' leader to the western environmental movement's first 'eco-martyr' – and how his struggle has been perceived by our media – is riddled with echoes of imperialism.

Why was the burning of the Amazon seized on by the West with such passion as the central symbol of the impending ecological catastrophe in the late-80s? In 1988, the US experienced drought across 40% of the country; worldwide, it was the hottest year on record. The 'greenhouse effect' became a public talking point. This coincided with the first satellite pictures showing the fires destroying the Brazilian Amazon at an exponential rate, accounting for some 17% of excess carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. One can buy T-shirts in New York or Manchester demanding: 'Save *Our* Rainforest'.

Chico Mendes' assassination, by the ranchers who were torching the forest, occured at this crucial juncture. His death became a cause celebre, with many newspapers placing the story on the front page, and Brazilian embassies found themselves fending off protests around the world. Mendes' story has become a lucrative commodity with 15 film companies descending on his town of Xapuri, chequebooks in hand. Al Pacino and Dustin Hoffman were two of the names being bandied about as possible Chicos.

Alex Shoumatoff and Andrew Revkin, both US journalists, are just two of the thousands who poured into the western Amazon state of Acre in the wake of Mendes' murder. Shoumatoff's *Vanity Fair* article was snapped up by Robert Redford, but his subsequent book *The World is Burning*, a journey through the forest in search of both the 'real' Mendes and his killers, has been withdrawn by Chatto in the UK for legal reasons. Andrew Revkin spent four months in the forest, before emerging to write **The Burning Season** (*Collins, hbk £15, pbk £9.99*). He claims that when Mendes' union colleagues demanded to know why they should trust him and cooperate he replied: I am here to find the truth.

Revkin, who had no previous experience of Brazil or the Amazon, frames the struggles of the rubber tappers' union in terms of the international 'fight to save the Amazon'. It is the ecological tragedy that underlies his concern, perhaps not surprising for a western scientific reporter. The two or three million people who live in the region are little more than earlier invaders who 'tread lightly'; the rubber tappers are 'simply another species' under threat from encroaching deforestation. Revkin does show a genuine concern and even respect for the rubber tappers, but for him their movement would seem to be only truly significant when it links up with western environmentalists, lobbying in Washington. Mendes, through Revkin's eyes, is drained of his fundamentally political motivation; apparently it was Mendes' 'instinctual respect' for the Amazon 'that caused such anger when he was later confronted with a flood of newcomers bent on destroying the forest'.

Turning to Chico Mendes' own account, in **Fight For The Forest** (*Latin American Bureau, pbk £3.95*), deriving from an interview Mendes gave shortly before his death, we are given a radically different perspective. Mendes defines the nature of their struggle: 'We are up against the political power of the land-owners', emphasising that this is a battle for land and resources between those who make a sustainable living from the trees and those who are profiting from the forest's destruction. The word 'environment' only briefly figures in Mendes' conversation.

Revkin attempts to portray the 'greening' of Mendes as a fundamental shift in his approach to the struggle – something more than the rubber tappers' previous class and economic-based outlook. But for the people of the forest this dichotomy between ecology and land is a false one, as 'The Declaration of the Peoples of the Forest', published at the back of the *LAB* book, demonstrates. Signed by the National Council of Rubber Tappers and the Union of Indigenous (Indian) Nations it describes the 'immense, but fragile life-system' which is both 'the source of our wealth and the basis of our cultures'.

Veteran film-maker Adrian Cowell's book, mainly based on episodes from his enormous film project of the past ten years, shows the human toll of **The Decade of Destruction** (*Hodder and Stoughton, hbk £14.99*). The seven chapters illustrate different aspects of the destruction wrought by the invasion of the 'developers' through one individual's story, and read like a vivid tableaux of greed, misery, tragedy and despair – and occasional hope. The book ends with a closely observed, affectionate and informative portrait of Chico Mendes and the rubber tappers.

As in the film, shown recently on Channel Four, Cowell presents Mendes as a revolutionary, and writes with romantic fascination of Chico's youthful friendship with a survivor of the legendary communist Prestes Column, who taught the illiterate rubber tapper to read and educated him politically. Cowell's friendship with Mendes began in 1986, and the film crew were to follow him over the next three years, until his death at Christmas 1988. It was in these three months that Cowell also started writing, in the terrible aftermath of his son's death, and it is perhaps this experience which makes the book so haunting, and compelling, written with the deep familiarity of a man who first journeyed to the Amazon as a young student in 1957, and who has spent many of the intervening years filming its people.

In Revkin's account on the other hand, many of the scenes are reconstructed – including the murder, which takes almost the whole of chapter one to reach its denouement, the author drawing out the suspense. He provides a fairly comprehensive, if pedestrian, account of the region's history and of the factors driving deforestation, but much is second-hand, culled from fairly well-known sources.

There are several interesting comparisons to make between all three books. A central issue is the role that Chico Mendes and the rubber tappers' union have played in the 'struggle to save the rainforest'.

Revkin's account is structured around the influence of a small cast of largely western and non-Amazonian characters; the people with whom he spent the most time and most readily identified with. The paternalistic tinge in his approach to Mendes leads Revkin to claim that if it had not been for these mentors, including Cowell, Mendes would have remained a backwater, uninfluential activist. Cowell, however, accords Mendes a more active role, a man who skilfully 'made use of' his trips to Washington and New York in the latter part of the decade to arouse political and banking opposition to the destructive roads and dams being financed by the

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World Bank and others.

In his introduction to *Fight For The Forest*, Tony Gross, a good friend of Mendes, writes in reference to his co-option by western environmental movements, 'Chico would not have wanted to be cast as a hero'. Revkin ignores the specific nature of the struggle, its collectiveness; under his pen Mendes is drawn as another lone, brave hero – ripe for Hollywood – struggling for a good cause: 'to the ranchers of the Amazon what Lech Walesa was to the shipyard workers of Gdansk'. But Mendes restores the forest people as leaders of the struggle: 'We all worked together to build up that spirit, that love. They would have to kill us all to destroy our movement and they can't.'●

Dollan Cannell on the man trapped by the experience

Purple Haze

It was twenty years ago that Jimi Hendrix died a messy and unnecessary death after months of depression, frustration and loss of direction. To celebrate the anniversary there has been a major biography, the belated accounts of the two other members of the Jimi Hendrix Experience, Noel Redding and Mitch Mitchell, a retrospective LP, and an advertising campaign for Wranglers Jeans that wheels Hendrix out to do service from the museum of popular icons.

The timing of all this hype is apt and the Wranglers advert forced home the ways in which the spirit of Hendrix resonates within modern counter-culture. In the ad Hendrix is used to link two cultural moments – the 'summer of love' of 1967 and its sister year two decades later. But it is the song 'Crosstown Traffic' that does the work and not a cartoon image. Just possibly, the music has become more important than the picture of the crazy black guy who took lots of drugs.

No direct line of descent can be traced from Hendrix to what is happening musically now, but there is a shared mood which extends beyond the acid house and flamboyant wardrobes. Hendrix cross-fertilised. He was soaked in the blues and had absorbed an astonishing range of black musical history in general, be it the Isley Brothers or John Coltrane.

Yet his music was most readily understood by the same audience that lionised Eric Clapton. Blues derived guitar rock was appropriated as a white form despite being a black one for almost its entire history. Hendrix did not in any case perceive these discreet musical boundaries.

House and even bands like the Stone Roses and Happy Mondays also have a currency of fusing traditions previously regarded as opposite. And the medium for the creative generic chaos at both moments is an awareness of the possibilities of the new technology. Hendrix, like house, sounded utterly new in 1967 and strained the available equipment to its limits. The thrill of a Public Enemy record, just as for Hendrix, is the rebellious joy of soldering destructive energy with formal innovation.

At the Monterey Pop festival in 1967 there was a legendary duel of rock showmanship. The Who preceded the Jimi Hendrix Experience on the bill and so might have been expected to have cornered the market in smashing up guitars. But Hendrix made Townshend's efforts look tame. He played his guitar between his legs, on his knees, behind his back, even while doing somersaults. He simulated sex with the speakers, then rammed his guitar into one of them for maximum screech. He doused the instrument with lighter fuel and made sure that when he finally destroyed it, it was on fire.

Hendrix's reputation and ability to inspire has of course scarcely dropped since his death. But it is largely in this incarnation as black psychedelic whirling dervish that he survives, never having had enough time to replace this image with a more flexible one.

This gives him an enduring appeal beyond that of his living contemporaries; he provides a symbol of pure rock 'n' roll authenticity. But the image also traps him, and however sincere the hagiographic process, it is trivialising, he is marked off as a curiosity. The burnt offerings, in fact, were extremely rare.

Charles Shaar Murray's book from last year, *Crosstown Traffic*, opened out the field within which Hendrix's music can be understood and the latest biography **Jimi Hendrix – Electric Gypsy** (*William Heinemann £14.95*) by Harry Shapiro and Caesar Glebbeek, displays an onus not to perpetuate the trivialising aspects of the legend.

The authors pick their way through his life with great circumspection. For them, stories about the plaster casting of Hendrix's penis do him only a disservice. Experience bassist Noel Redding, by no stretch of the imagination a hagiographer, admits in his account **Are You Experienced? – The inside story of the Jimi Hendrix Experience** (*Fourth Estate, hbk £14.99*) that this, for him almost entirely bitter experience, happened so fast that the myths are hard to separate from the reality.

Shapiro and Glebbeek, while they do not set themselves the task of probing inside the man, emphasise Hendrix's sense of being trapped. One of his closer girlfriends, Kathy Etchingham, describes how not long after he became successful he started to hate his image. 'He would sit at the end of the bed almost in tears, trying to explain to me...how he was fed up with his stage act and what people expected of him'. The biographers hear 'a primeval scream demanding the one request denied him – LEAVE ME ALONE!'

When he died, Hendrix was about to try and make a real break, apparently terminally bored with the rock format and in dire need of sorting out the disastrous business of his career. He had sessions arranged with the great jazz arranger Gil Evans and had jammed with Miles Davis. John McLaughlin had already shown that rock influenced guitar could work on a Miles record. A new career as a jazz musician might have resolved many of the contradictions inherent in Hendrix's position, but the projects he did complete have renewed their appeal.●

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EVENTS

● **"Group of leftish people from Dresden/Hamburg seeking contact** with other European groups looking for new ways of political thinking and acting in New Times. Contact: Hannes Schiebener, Moorkamp 18, 2000 Hamburg 36, FRGermany, Mailbox: H. Schiebener LINK-HH.ZER

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● **London: "Gramsci 100".** A MArxism Today one-day seminar to mark the centenary of Gramsci's birth. Papers on party and hegemony; the European national-popular; role of intellectuals and more. Speakers include Anne Showstack Sassoon, Andrew Gamble and Roger Simon. Places will be strictly limited, tickets at £8/£4 (unwaged with evidence of status) are available now. The seminar will take place in central London on Saturday January 26th. Tickets/details from 28 Wargrave Avenue, London N15 6UD. Tel (081) 809 5068.

● **Out Of The Blue** A conference looking beyond Thatcherism at the issues of Political Democracy, the Environment, Economic Policy, the New World Order, Sexuality, Gender and Oppression and Cultural Politics.
For further details contact Bill Inne CPGB, Leeds TUC Club, Savile Mount, Leeds LS7 3HZ. 0532 626343.

● **Memory as evidence: Oral History in Eastern Europe.** A day seminar organised by the Oral History Society. Saturday 8th December 10am to 4pm. Chair, John Saville; speakers, Paul Thompson and Philip Whitehead Mary Ward Centre, 42 Queens Square, London WC1. £5/£/cons. Information from Rob Perks 071 589 6603.

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● **Cardiff: Active Marxism Today Group** continues to meet each month. Details from Peter Davies on (0222) 227255.

● **Manchester: "The Euroconference".** Manchester Marxism Today Group is organising this major European day of discussion. British speakers including David Marquand join leading international figures from Germany, Italy and elsewhere. The event takes place at Manchester Town Hall, Saturday February 23rd. Details from 061-445 6333/061-434 8930.

● **Birmingham: MT readers group.** Next meeting: "Greening The State". 5 December, 8p, room 5, Winterbourne, (School of Continuing Studies), Edgbaston Park Rd. All welcome.

MESSAGES

● **The YCL.** Were you ever involved? Would you respond to a questionnaire? Contact Mike Waite, Sociology Department (Post Grad), University of Lancaster, LA1 4YW.

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Interbooks, MX1, 8 Abbot Street, Perth, PH2 OEB. Tel: 0738-30707.

● **Anarchist Yearbook.** Send £1.50 to Phoenix Press, PO Box 824, London, N1 9DL, for 32 page pamphlet.

● **Desperately Seeking Big Flames** "Past Against Our Future: Fighting Racism and Fascism" – David Greason, Box 47528, Morrison Hill. Hong Kong.

MT EVENTS

● **Golders Green, Hendon, Finchley MT readers group.** Contact 081-455 1616.

● **North London: Two Marxism Today events** planned for 1991, a Gramsci centenary seminar, and a major day event on sexual politics. Help and ideas on both most welcome, please write to North London MT Forum, c/o 28 Wargrave Avenue, London N15 6UD.

● **Cardiff: Active Marxism Today Group** continues to meet on the second Monday of each month. Details from Peter, 0222-227255.

● **Haringey: "Going Green".** Women are the forefront of the Green movement, what does the gender-gap on environmentalism mean for the future of politics? A panel discussion with speakers from Women's Environmental Network, Labour Party, New Statesman. Tuesday November 27th, 7.45pm at Hornsey Library, Haringey Park, Crouch End N8. Organised by Haringey Marxism Today Group, details on (081) 348 8915.

● **London "Gramsci 100".** A Marxism Today one-day seminar to mark the centenary of Gramsci's birth. Papers on party and hegemony; the European national-popular; role of intellectuals; beyond Thatcherism. Places will be strictly limited, tickets at £8/£4 (unwaged, with evidence of status) are available now. The seminar will take place in Central London on Saturday January 26th. Tickets/details from 28 Wargrave Avenue, London N15 6UD, (081) 809 5068.

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Caron Wheeler

What newspapers do you take? *Billboard, Evening Standard, Record Mirror.*

What foreign languages do you speak? A little French, patois.

What is your favourite tv programme? *The Twilight Zone.*

When do you listen to music? While I'm driving.

When was the last time you prayed? Just now.

What was your first thought this morning? It's good to be who I am.

Do you have a recurring dream? No.

What is the most common colour in your wardrobe? Purple, because it's regal.

What is your favourite meeting place? The Blue Elephant restaurant in Fulham, because of its tranquil and spiritual surroundings.

Which piece of architecture moves you to either heaven or hell? To heaven: the Orange Tree office, because we're learning so much in it. To hell: Elephant and Castle shopping centre, because it's such a nasty shade of pink.

Who do you reveal your secrets to? My lover.

What makes you feel secure? Learning about my ancestors' endurance and spiritual depth.

How regularly do you consult your horoscope? Occasionally.

What do you blame your parents for? Not loving themselves enough.

What do you envy about your children's lifestyle? I don't.

When did you last visit your parents? Today.

What is your biggest regret? Not remembering my African name or true identity.

You're driving through a hot, desolate expanse. What's playing on the stereo? Loose Ends – *Don't Try To Change Me.*

Caron Wheeler was born in England in 1963 to Jamaican parents. A self-described 'workaholic', she started singing at the age of 12 with female trio Brown Sugar. Her powerful soul vocals first achieved recognition with Soul II Soul but she has also worked with Elvis Costello, Phil Collins and Neneh Cherry. In 1989 she was awarded a Grammy for 'Best Vocal Performance' on the Soul II Soul single 'Back To Life' and started her own independent record company Orange Tree Productions. She has just released her first solo album 'UK Blak'.

Which is your city of the nineties? Amsterdam. There's more reality, openness and life there.

Where do you wish you were living? Somewhere hot by the sea where I would feel more relaxed.

Where is your favourite holiday destination? I'm still checking them out.

How has your diet changed in the past ten years? I'm more conscious of what I eat. Mostly natural and veggie food, salad etc.

What physical exercise do you do? Walking.

Under what circumstances would you use private medicine? If I were having a baby!

At what age do you want to stop working? When I'm out of ideas.

Do you really need your car? Yeah, it's fun.

What is your favourite advertisement? Harvest Crunch.

What are you doing for the environment? The Orange Tree offices uses recycled products.

What part of this life would you recycle into the next? The learning of 'the way', our way of life.

Who do you respect? Anyone who has the guts to be true to themselves regardless of the circumstances.

What do you no longer believe in? Christmas.

What would you die for? The advancement of my people.

What do you now own that you had never dreamt of owning? Nothing.

What single thing has most influenced or changed your life? Reading literature by black writers, especially *Two Thousand Seasons* by Ayi Kwei Armah.

What is the most amount of money you've spent on an item of clothing? £500 on a green silk shirt.

What hi-tech device scares you? None of them, just the idiots who operate them!

How much time do you spend each day on the phone? 20-30 minutes.

Are you better off paying your poll tax? I would be if I believed in it.

What makes you feel guilty? Not taking what is rightfully mine.

Complete this sentence: If I were dictator for a day... I would visit all the established merchant bankers and take back the money that they made from the slave trade. I would then distribute it among the black community!

How much more do you want to achieve? My full potential.●

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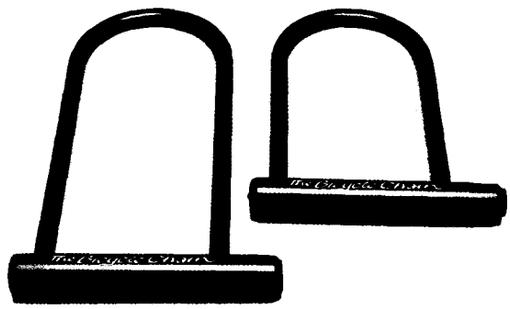
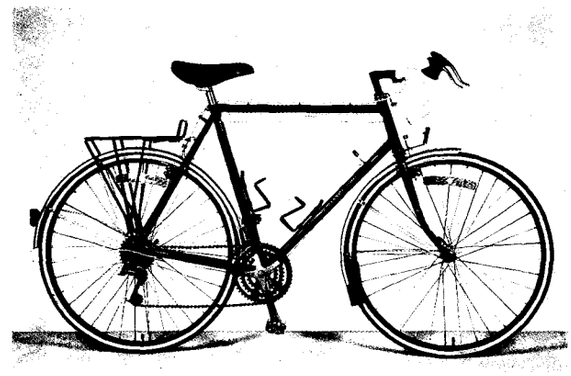
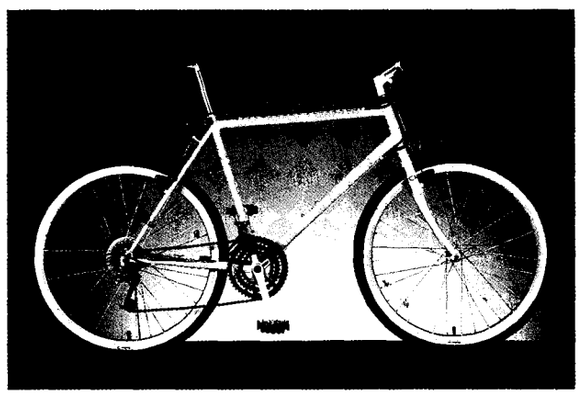
★ **Fume** filters and safety wear to keep you safe and well on today's busy streets.
Fume filter (to BS6016 type 2) £6.95



★ **Accessories** and spares for every occasion.
From chains to computers from brake blocks to U locks.
Long U lock £22.95 Short U lock £19.95

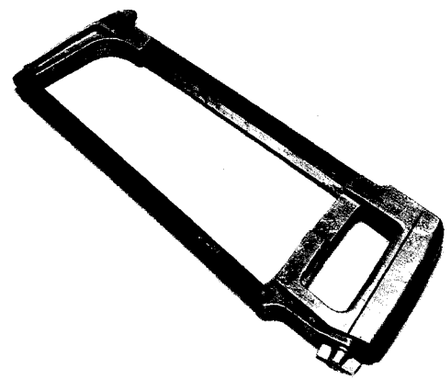


★ **Touring** and commuting bikes from The Bicycle Chain, and new this year the full Dawes Range.
Great Escapist £515.00



★ **Marin** Mountain Bikes. Lively and reliable.
Eye catching with the latest design features.
Palisades £359.00

MARIN
MOUNTAIN BIKES



★ **Repairs.** Our famed mobile repair service for sponsored rides sometimes needs a hacksaw to cope with the most extreme emergencies. Happily this is not too often the case for day to day repairs carried out in our specialist workshop.

For value and the best service come to London's favourite bike shop

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